My Racing Adventures

Arthur Nightingall

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MY RACING ADVENTURES

BY ARTHUR NIGHTINGALL
EDITED BY "G. G." (H. G. HARPER)

T. WERNER LAURIE
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I

A JOCKEY FAMILY

I.—A JOCKEY FAMILY

To begin at the beginning — and there is nothing like jumping off the mark with a nice lead—I was born at the famous South Hatch training stables, Epsom, in 1868. Riding, as alleged, runs in families, and it certainly seems to have been running very freely in mine for a long time past. We have cultivated a fine natural taste for jockeyship; we have taken to it as ducks take to water, though for a different reason. I cannot go back exactly to the remote period when Nightingalls were not riding—they have clung to the saddle in more senses than one, just as though their fortune were bound up in it—but my earliest record of their prowess in that direction is a curious old whip, now in my possession. It bears the following inscription: "Thomas Nightingall, 1738." It is evidently a presentation whip to a jockey for winning a race, and naturally we prize it in the family. Such treasures give a lustre that money cannot buy.

One of our greatest enthusiasts in respect to riding was my grandfather, John Nightingall, who used to steer racehorses regularly at exercise on Epsom Downs after he was eighty years of age. He always wore a top-hat for that purpose, persistently eschewing any other form of headgear; he declined emphatically to ride anything but a racehorse up to the very last; and the fact is not a little remarkable, especially having regard to his advanced age, that there were some queer-tempered horses in our stable that he rode better than any one else. If we had a trial in which he was not allowed to take part, his indignation was expressed in vigorous or riotous terms. "What!" he would exclaim, "too old, am I? Well, if some of you youngsters had half my pluck, you would win more races than are now placed to the credit of your account."

Another of his aphorisms was to the effect that so long as a man keeps on riding he will never grow old. He will pass quietly away before he has time to realise that anything special or important has happened. "Stick to the saddle, my lad," advised my grandfather, "and age will not trouble you till it is almost too late to make a fatal impression."

He was notable for his fine "hands" on a horse;

whilst, curiously, he adopted almost the same seat as that now associated with the American jockeys. He was an excellent judge of pace. One morning, on "Six Mile Hill," Epsom Downs, he rode in a trial—he was a very old man then —with his son (my father) and Robert I'Anson, the celebrated jockey, who called to him to lay up with them, as he seemed to be out of his ground. "I'll lay up with you directly," he shouted back, "and also lay you out. Wait till I get my steam up." He won in a canter by several lengths when his steam was up, and his subsequent comments as to the riding of his antagonists were exceedingly caustic. He was never at a loss for words when he had anything to say.

I may also mention here that the jockey traditions of our family must have been carried on in unbroken sequence since Thomas Nightingall scored, as already recorded, in 1738, though I possess no information with reference to what my forefathers did in the pigskin prior to the date mentioned. Probably they were doing a little incidental "flapping" on their own account, so as to keep their hand in for more important engagements. Indeed, I have a recollection of my father speaking about a brilliant riding

adventure of his at Barnet Fair, where he won a couple of races worth thirteen sovereigns each, run in heats of about 2 miles, and as he walked his horse to the meeting—a journey of 15 miles —and back again at night, the work which he accomplished to win twenty-six pounds was sufficiently meritorious. "Little fish are sweet," he remarked pertinently, "when the big ones won't bite; and when they do bite, it is just as well to be prepared for hauling them in." He, too, was never short of verbiage, as may be said, when his ideas were worth communication. If one's first barrel misses, the second may surprise us by the extent of its slaughter.

At an early stage of his career, my grandfather was a farmer in Hertfordshire under Lord Temple, not far from Brocket Hall. He always had a few useful horses in training that could hold their own and a bit more at such old-fashioned meetings as Gorhambury, The Hoo, Barnet, Hertford, and St Albans, all of which are, I believe, now defunct. He also trained for Lord Melbourne and Lord Palmerston, riding frequently with success for his own stable. His noble patrons were delighted. Lord Palmerston —so the legend runs—once said to him: "Nightingall, you have ridden very well in this last

race, and if you were able to ride much better, the other jockeys would require a new pair of wings ere they dare to fly with you again." The old gentleman suitably acknowledged that august recognition of his merit.

Thus bred to the game, so to speak, my father began riding at an early age; he had the right sort of practice and tuition. He was fairly successful on the flat, and in 1860 he was performing regularly in steeplechases. At about that date he had the mount on a horse called "Roscommon" in the Berkshire Open Steeplechase, when he made a grand race of it against George Stevens on "Omar Pacha," but the latter just managed to beat him for first place. Riding in that race were such famous jockeys as Tom Oliver, Joe Kendall, Mr Thomas, Chris. Green, and George Holman; so, as will be noted, my father was trying himself pretty highly on that occasion. But, if his steed were good enough for the job, he was never intimidated by the strength of the opposition. "Do your best," he was wont to say, "and if there is a better to beat you at the finish, that is your misfortune, not your fault." Such words of wisdom were treasured up by us for future use in case of accident.

I remember my father telling me, for instance

—though he was not by nature a loquacious man —that one of the best horses he ever rode was "Cosmopolite," as to whom a good story is told. When he steered that celebrity at Hereford, "Cosmopolite" was in charge of an Irishman, who used to talk rather too much concerning his own business — always a foolish thing to do (especially on a racecourse) when your business is likely to yield a dividend.

Before that race at Hereford, the Irishman mentioned to a few confidential friends—and he might as well have proclaimed the news from the top of the grand stand—that his competitor was not sure to win, since his object was to get weight off for the Grand National. On the night of his arrival at Hereford, so the story goes, he indulged his convivial tastes somewhat too freely, with the result that he could not ride his charge next day. His bosom friends put up my father, and backed the horse to win a nice stake, which he landed comfortably. For the great event at Liverpool, his weight went up considerably, his success was discounted, and the moral of the story, as my sire explained to us, was this: "Keep your hands down and your mouth shut when you have a horse good enough to win when you want him."

It is a remarkable fact that my three brothers

as well as myself rode a winner over a country at the first time of asking. Mine was "Struanite," William's "Magpie," Robert's "Swindler," and John's "Saltator II." It seems to me that is assuredly a record so far as one jockey family is concerned. My brother "Bill," the now well-known trainer at South Hatch, is about eighteen months older than I am, and considerably heavier. He has given up riding in races for some time. He was a fine horseman in his day. He had his first mount at the Sandown Autumn Meeting in 1881. That was on the late Mr George Masterman's "Lord March," in a selling nursery, and on that occasion William went to scale at 7 st. 2 lb. He now weighs about 12 st. His first winning mount under Jockey Club Rules was at the old Croydon Meeting—we always did fairly well at Woodside, both on the flat and over a country—where he steered Mr J. N. Astley's "Magpie" to victory in artistic style. Also triumphant was brother William in his first effort in public over hurdles, when he carried the late Mr T. V. Morgan's colours in a hunter's plate at the Manchester January Meeting, in 1884. He was compelled to relinquish public riding by increased weight and the cares of a large training establishment.

Here is an appropriate extract from my scrapbook: "February 28, 1891. On this day John Nightingall, aged eight years, rode his pony, 'Punchie,' with the Surrey Union Foxhounds by himself, and rode to the finish, when hounds killed their fox after a great run. Mr Bennett, the Master, afterwards presented John Nightingall with the brush." That refers, of course, to my youngest brother. Keen on hunting, with a strong *penchant* for golf, he now also rides his fair share of winners. I may interpolate another excerpt from the same sporting volume just quoted, to wit: "As John Nightingall was winning on 'Royal Rouge'"—people used to call him "Royal Rogue," but not now—"it reminded me of a conversation I had with his father many years ago. I was talking to old John about the splendid horsemanship of his sons, William and Arthur, and he said: 'Yes, they ride very well, but wait until little Jack is old enough to ride; his mother is Bob I'Anson's sister.'"

That pedigree is, of course, unimpeachable. I have seen all the best cross-country riders during the past twenty-five years, and have ridden against most of them; but I have never seen a better — I never hope to do so — than genial Robert I'Anson. It is a treat to watch him now

riding his cob on Epsom Downs of a morning. Hands and seat are still perfect, the sporting spirit is still willing, his pluck is undaunted: if he only had his youth again!

To return, therefore, for a moment to our thesis that "riding runs in families," and apparently does not easily run out, it is obvious that the Nightingalls have had their share of good fortune in that respect. We have always been at home in the saddle; if we have not been actually nurtured there, so to speak, we have been encouraged to cling very closely from earliest days. And what better fun can a man wish to enjoy, especially if he be a sportsman at heart? The other sorts are scarcely equal in point of genuine ecstasy.

II

EARLIEST RIDING DAYS

II.—EARLIEST RIDING DAYS

As a matter of fact, I scarcely remember the days when I was not riding. My father's views as to the training of a jockey were that the latter must begin when he is young, and that, unless he makes an early start, he is not likely to "finish" with true artistic skill. Those ideas were certainly carried into practical effect so far as my brothers and I have been concerned. Chances to excel were placed in our way. I have always thought that the reason why many gentlemen jockeys do not acquire the art of "finishing" brilliantly is that they did not commence to learn at a sufficiently early age. Possessing many of the other essentials, with plenty of pluck and enthusiasm, they have failed to some extent when it came to a question of a severe struggle after jumping the last fence.

At the age of about six or seven I began to ride a pony, and a queer-tempered customer he was, having only one eye and an abundance of

original sin. Yet, strange to relate, he gave three of us—to say nothing of many of the stable apprentices—our first lessons in the equestrian art, and he taught more jockeys perhaps in all than any quadruped whose lines were cast in such sporting places. He had quite a genius for upsetting us when he grew tired of our society. That was an illuminating educational process; we often saw a variety of coloured stars. He lived to a great age, and was a warrior to the last.

Then, at about the age of ten, I was promoted to the dignity of riding a quiet racehorse at exercise—one of the proudest and happiest moments of my life. To take one's place in the string, to canter up Middle Hill with the air of a conqueror before the numbers were hoisted, to feel your mount pulling at you exuberantly as if you were a full-grown monster instead of a youthful bantam—well, such sensations are exquisite enough while they retain their bloom. After a terrible "purler" or two some of the gilt is taken off the gingerbread; in fact, there is nothing, perhaps, but gingerbread left, and poor at that. One toes the scratch again with a sense of futility.

What is wanted (amongst other things) in the

making of a jockey is a number of different horses for him to perform on, so that he obtains a great deal of variegated practice. Thus as a boy I used to ride out at least three times a day—once with the first lot (including probably three or four gallops), again with the second lot or "spares," and afterwards on yearlings in the afternoon. The last-mentioned experience is excellent and very lively; it certainly helps to give a man good "hands." The yearlings are usually brisk and amusing; they do a lot of funny things—not necessarily funny to their pilot unless he is able to enter into the spirit of the joke. Its essence will be lost on him if he finds himself on his back in the mud.

Then there are the trials. I never used to miss one; and, of course, they also help in a most important sense to put the finishing touch on a jockey's education. They teach him, in effect, how to "finish," also judgment of pace, when to make his effort, not to be flurried; they give him confidence, nerve, quickness to seize the psychological moment. A lad who is constantly riding in trials must be naturally a dunce if he does not learn something to his advantage. Skill comes to him when he takes kindly to the business. His chief drawback is, maybe,

increased weight, and none of us are fond of "wasting" ourselves to death in the hope of getting a living.

With respect to trials, moreover, I may mention here a melancholy incident which occurred in our family. My eldest brother John—who had just ridden his first winner on "Brassey" at Eltham—had a mount in a trial at Headley Common, when his horse bolted with him (he was only fourteen), and dashed his head violently against a tree, death being almost immediate. He promised to become a brilliant jockey. So far as I am aware, poor "Johnnie" was the only Nightingall who has met his death in consequence of a riding accident.

Recognising the necessity of the best sort of practice for us, my father encouraged both William and myself, when we were boys, to ride on the flat in public for nothing. We did that on several occasions with considerable success: a juvenile conspirator who expects nothing is not easily routed. Mr E. Woodland, the estimable trainer and thorough sportsman, often gave me a leg up—I could go to scale at about 7 st. 5 lb. at that time—and one of my earliest winners was ridden for that gentleman. His daughter, Miss May Woodland, is undoubtedly the finest

all-round horsewoman I have ever seen—another proof, if one were wanted, of my thesis already enunciated, that riding runs in families. One must be bred in the right way, apparently, to achieve fame (and fat fees) in the pigskin. The falls, of course, don't count.

I began to ride "schooling," as the phrase goes, immediately I left school. First over hurdles, next over fences, on all sorts of young thoroughbred horses, taking things as they came, up and down, on and off—it was an exhilarating exercise. At the age of fourteen I sustained one of the worst falls of my career, which has been rich in incidents of that kind. A horse called "Sandhill" came to grief with me in a gallop over the Steeplechase Course at home, breaking several of my ribs and rendering me insensible for four hours. On coming to, my ideas were considerably mixed, my head seemed in a whirl; but I thought to myself: "Well, if this is an essential part of a jockey's education, the sooner mine is completed the better."

Since that time, whilst following my profession in many countries, I have taken a large number of diversified "tosses," some of which were pernicious, and the others did me little or no good. They will form the text of a future

chapter. But we are not supposed to squeal if the damage is less than fatal. "Outed" in one act, as the wags express it—they who do the talking, not the work.

I have also a vivid remembrance of my first long gallop of $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles over fences, which took place at Sandown Park, when I was quite a youngster. We were trying "The Scot" for the Grand National, his chance being fancied. The jockeys engaged were the late John Jones, of Epsom (he won the "National" on "Shifnal" for my father), Arthur Hall (now living in retirement at Epsom), my brother Willie, and myself. His Majesty the King (then Prince of Wales) was present to see the trial, as were also Lord Alington, Sir F. Johnstone, and Lord Marcus Beresford. My brother and I rode about 7 st. 7 lb. at that time—rather light for 'chasing—yet, curiously, we were the only starters who completed the course. The others came to grief at different stages of the journey. The King was greatly interested in the proceedings. He asked who were the two triumphant small boys, complimenting us on our jockeyship, and I had certainly no idea then that I should have the pleasure and honour of riding for His Majesty in future years. Arthur Hall, who was knocked out by a bad

fall abroad, won the "Sefton" for the King on "Magic."

The amount of riding we used to do at home in those early days was little short of amazing. For example, on a "schooling" morning we often took fifteen or twenty horses to Walton, where our private steeplechase and hurdle courses were (and are) laid out. My brother and I rode the lot between us, two going at a time, and afterwards we drove to Sandown or Kempton so as to take part in three or four more races. We had done a good day's work, even if there were not a few incidental "purlers," by the time we had finished. It was a sovereign cure for dyspepsia. Yet how true is the statement, made without recklessness or *arrière pensée*, that cross-country jockeys for a modest remuneration accept risks as an inevitable feature of their programme which an ordinary citizen would not or could not accept for all the money in the world. He is not built that way, and has no taste for reconstruction.

One of my most lonely rides was over the big Aintree country some years ago. There were two runners for a steeplechase. I steered one, and the other "came it," as the savants say, at the first fence. I was left to do the 4 miles in

solitude, but my mount, good old "Pickles," jumped perfectly without company, and never made a mistake. It was the last race on the card. A friend said to me after it was over: "You seemed to be hurrying a great deal, though you had nothing to catch."

"Oh yes, I had"—such was my reply—"I wanted to catch a train."

This work of "schooling" is, of course, very important; otherwise horses may easily make a hole in their manners, if not in the ditch or their jockey. The latter wants about nine lives at least, and in the event of his calling for another he may find the star gone. Still, no sport is more delightful than that of riding over fences, especially when you win, and the punters, with cash in pocket, do not forget to lead the applause. Such exercise keeps a man wonderfully fit and well till he gets a bad fall, perhaps, and is swept up for sanitary or other purposes.

Recalling, therefore, the lessons of my youth, I agree with the pronouncement that it is impossible to lay down hard and fast rules (on paper or elsewhere) with regard to steeplechase riding. We can only acquire skill, as intimated, by constant practice of the right sort, by cultivating our natural aptitude to the fullest degree, by indomit-

able perseverance and pluck. One should sit as still as possible when riding over a country, and never drive a horse at a fence unless he is a slug. He may jump better if he is not interfered with at a critical moment.

The great art in riding a beaten horse is to put your whip down and not ride him into his fences, while assisting him as much as you can with your hands. I have no special faith in the efficacy of spurs. I use what are called "dummies"—that is, spurs with no rowels at all. When I won the Grand National on "Ilex"—of which more anon—he was never hit nor touched, and had not a mark on him at the end of that long, tiring journey.

III

MY FIRST WINNERS

III.—MY FIRST WINNERS

It is a proud moment for a young jockey when he puts his breeches and boots on for the first time, even if he has no spurs, and the world seems to be a glorious place to him as he canters gaily to the post, feeling confident of success. What hopes are centred in that small frame! If his horse is only good enough! He is determined to leave no stone unturned, no chance missed, to secure a brilliant victory, perhaps in the last stride by a short head—if by superior jockeyship, so much the better. Verily, those are thrilling passages in a bright sporting career.

My first mount in public was on "Pilfer" in the Houndean Plate at Lewes in 1882, and—it is a sad confession to make—I was "down the course." "Pilfer" lacked the speed necessary to do the trick, and I was immensely disappointed. Somewhat curiously, my father also rode in that race—we do not often see such an antagonism of near relatives—his mount being Mr T. Radmall's

"Stuart," and he did not appear to be at all grieved when he put paid to my account on that occasion. His words of consolation were few and terse.

"When we do not win," he said, in effect, "at the first time of asking, we must try, try again, go on trying, and the man in the box will see us all right in time if we continue to pester him sufficiently."

The man in the box soon saw me at the head of affairs. My first winning mount was on "Bonnie King Charley" at Alexandra Park in 1883. Several noteworthy circumstances were associated with that triumph. On the same day, before he won at 5 furlongs, I had ridden "Bonnie King Charley" in a mile race, when he made no show at all; in his second essay he started at 100 to 1 against him, with bookmakers anxious to lay; he beat a hot favourite in Sir G. Chetwynd's "Shy," ridden by Charles Wood; yet, truth to tell, I was not supposed to be "on the map." All the most astute judges were vastly surprised when I came sailing home in front, though naturally I did not experience any sensations of astonishment. A young jockey generally feels pretty sure that he is going to win when the local conditions are at all favour-

able. The idea of defeat—until he is defeated—does not enter into his calculations.

What made "Bonnie King Charley's" victory the more extraordinary was the fact that he presented the appearance of a short-tailed hunter, and looked more like catching foxes than winning races. But he was a genuine tryer, with a nice turn of speed. His owner, Mr E. Woodland, had been riding him in Hunters' Flat Races—then rather popular, now rarely seen—and his sudden conversion into a successful sprinter was not a little wonderful. I shall always remember him with affection and gratitude. One's first winner is something like one's first love—sweeter than the others.

Soon after that initial victory I began to turn my attention to steeplechase riding, of which I have always been very fond. Here I was successful at the first attempt, as narrated. That was on "Struanite," at Sandown Park in 1884. She belonged to Mr "Regent," and my father trained her. It was just about that time the unguarded ditch was introduced; it was an awkward fence to negotiate, falls being frequent there; but happily "Struanite" made no mistake, jumping perfectly, and winning in clever style. The open ditch, as it actually was at that period,

was also situated in an unfavourable position at Sandown, being half-way down the hill after passing the stand, and some of the jockeys considered it a trifle "trappy." "Struanite" put me on good terms with myself that day. I had already won, as the saying is, many "Nationals" in my mind—far more, of course, than the three I have actually placed to my credit.

The unguarded ditch, I may add, did not last long. It was not favourably regarded by owners, trainers, and jockeys, so the present guard-rail was introduced, and, in my opinion, it is a great improvement. The "ditch," as now constructed, has no terrors for a horse properly "schooled," or for a jockey who has not begun to see the red light.

Writing about the "ditch," too—and can we have a more congenial subject in this sporting chronicle?—serves to remind me of quaint adventures which I encountered at Ludlow. Whilst riding "Why Not" there I once fell three times in the same race. Having run up that score, I thought the number sufficient, and ceased to persevere. Every runner in that steeplechase fell, including the winner, "Midshipmite," who was ridden by the late W. Sensier.

A friend complimented me on my immunity from damage in connection with that series of "purlers," stating that if I had been born an acrobat I could not have given a more talented exhibition of the art of tumbling. Somersaults from the saddle, so he described them, adding: "Whether you fall on your feet or on your features, the result seems to be the same — spectators are equally thrilled."

It is such badinage that we are obliged to hear when we return to the paddock after being tossed about as if our lives were superfluous. It has been my custom to affect a similar spirit of jocularity, even if I felt it not in consequence of internal or similar pain. Besides, alas, we get nothing extra for pulling a long face, or for the time spent on our back in the ambulance. If we are not left to "lick the dew off the grass," minor considerations need not be regarded as appalling. Thirst is soon appeased in the manner indicated.

My riding adventures at Ludlow have been, indeed, full of excitement. On 2nd May 1890, I won the Great Shropshire Handicap of 3 miles on "Ireland," with "Wilton" (steered by Mr "Chris." Waller) second. All the runners in that race fell except the first two — a fact

which is the more extraordinary, because those who came to grief comprised such accomplished 'chasers as "Cloister" (W. Nightingall), "Doneraile" (Captain Middleton), "Bloodstone," (Butchers), "Hoheit" (Mitchell), and "Etonian" (Reilly). Little or no harm was done; a cross-country jockey learns to take a "severe shaking" as if the medicine were almost agreeable.

In the following year I won the same race on "M.P.," with "Ulysses" (Strong) second, and "Lord of the Glen" (Mr Waller) third. "Grief" was again abundant. "Oxton," "Ulysses," "Field Marshall," and "Hoheit" fell. Next year (1892), whilst riding in this steeplechase, I was second on "Springbank" to "Marcellus," ridden by Tom Adams, "Lady Pat" (Mr Ripley) being third. Of the starters on that occasion "Spree Boy," "Moonflower," and "Lady Pat" fell, the last-named being remounted, and finished third. In 1894, when this prize was won by "Midshipmite," all the runners fell (I was a victim on "Why Not," whom I subsequently rode to victory in the Grand National, as will be related in chronological order), and only the two placed horses finished. The Ludlow course was fairly big,

since the banks with furze on them wanted plenty of doing, in expert phrase; whilst, seeing that the race was run in the spring, the 'chasers were probably getting a little stale and overdone. I have certainly sampled a great deal of the Ludlow soil.

Amongst my early winners of whom I cherish a pleasant recollection was Lord M. Beresford's "Marcellus," on whom I won the Stanley Five-year-old Steeplechase at Aintree in 1893, and I also trained him myself. Such dual triumphs are exceptionally charming.

Going back to 1890, I have a vivid memory concerning the Mammoth Hunters' Steeplechase of fifteen hundred sovereigns; it was a very exciting race. I rode Mr T. G. Arthur's "Innisfail," carrying 12 st. 5 lb., and my brother William was on the back of "Cloister" (12 st. 12 lb.). We were esteemed as the two most likely competitors, and such was our opinion; at any rate, we rode with desperate energy against each other, neither conceding a point or an inch at any stage of the journey, the result being that a lightly-weighted runner—Duke of Hamilton's "Weatherwitch"—got up in the last stride and beat me by a head. "Cloister" was third, four lengths to the bad. I often think, in

moments of resignation, that if I had to ride that race again I might not be beaten by a head. Brother William and I were perhaps too eager to trounce each other on that occasion, and if Turf annals are searched with diligent care, other instances may be found—they are full of rich sporting significance — in which brotherly love has come off second best.

Another curious circumstance having relation to the same interesting subject is that the only dead-heat I have ridden in a steeplechase was on "Bay Comus" at Sandown against "Grey Friars," whose jockey was William Nightingall. Running it off, I asserted my supremacy for the nonce, but assuredly we both earned our fees in that race. "Grey Friars" was not such a cut-and-come-again customer as mine; hence he did not seem to reproduce his best form in the second outing. It is hard to struggle again to the bitter end, after reaching it once upsides with the leader.

There used to be, by the way, an old-time jockey who, as alleged, was rarely very strenuous, his vocation being, so the story goes, to ride horses not anxiously "expected." He was not particularly active and alert at the starting-post. Once the starter, having dropped his flag, called

to that jockey: "They are gone, Joe; they are gone." Still unruffled, though he was giving lengths away, our hero replied: "Gone, are they? Well, I'm blessed if I don't go after them."

It was he who gave advice to a young jockey accused of having done something suspicious in a race close to the stands. His wise counsel was this: "Don't drop your anchor in the harbour, my lad; drop it out at sea."

IV

"WASTING" AND WALKING

IV.—"WASTING" AND WALKING

I HAVE done a great deal of "wasting" in my time, and I cannot conscientiously say—that is, with my hand upon my heart, like a courtier—that "wasting" has ever done me much good. When a light man strives to become still lighter, as if weight were a positive curse to him, the money earned may go towards buying him a new sort of shroud, not a ticket for soup. Strange stories are told in this connection, and if they are not all strictly true—which is more than we are entitled to expect in this sporting world—some of them are certainly—truish. So much depends on one's audience and on what has been scheduled as their "capacity of swallow."

A young jockey wasting, for instance, once begged on his knees for a good dinner, and what he promptly received was a good hiding, administered so efficaciously that he lost his appetite for several days. He had no difficulty in

getting the desired weight off. "The only thing I possess," he moaned, "is my flesh, my own flesh, and they are stripping that off me at the rate of several nuggets per diem." The effect was not unmelodramatic, though, when the *dénouement* was reached, most of his friends were, as usual, gone. Few friends stay to see us cut up with gusto.

In my young days, when I was fifteen or sixteen years old, I was obliged to waste hard to ride 7 st. 7 lb. The process of attenuation is not exhilarating. I used to go for long walks in heavy "sweaters"—6 miles out and 6 miles back at a brisk pace, so as to induce a state of copious perspiration. I was able to get off about 4 lbs. in the first walk; and, of course, to keep it off more pedestrianism was necessary. "The suet," as an old jockey used to say, "is not easily evaporated." When it happens to be one's own suet one realises the terrors of the situation.

Food is, under these distressing circumstances, regarded as a sort of anachronism. We hope to have some more in due season, but we do not know when: the sooner the better, we think, but that is not good enough to bet on till the cows come home with overflowing udders. Whilst

"wasting" I had a small cup of tea in the morning, then rode at exercise, and as for dinner, I strolled out so as to escape the smell of it. The smell of it was too exciting to my imagination. For supper I was allowed to have a lightly boiled sole, with a sip or two of something harmless—fluid puts weight on more than food does—and that represented my day's total consumption. It would not have suited a fat, full-blooded man in the zenith of his power and bloatedness. But citizens of that calibre are not expected to take risks which might result in a premature explosion on their part, followed (at no distant date) by their descent into the silent tomb.

Nearly all the modern jockeys go and sit in a Turkish bath—with the exception of Mornington Cannon—when they have to "waste," whilst physic is also an important factor in their work of reduction. That is where, in my humble opinion, they make a mistake. I believe in long walks for the purpose indicated. At any rate, I have never adopted any other method, and, after many severe bouts of "wasting," I am still alive to tell the tale more or less coherently. Turkish baths and physic would have left me inarticulate. Readers will appreciate the blessings of my deliverance. It is foolish to be inarticulate when

the other fellow wishes to do all the talking and has nothing to say.

On a certain occasion I got off 7 lbs. in a very short time to ride a two-year-old of Mr Lea's (trained by S. Darling) in a big race at Kempton. As a matter of fact, I dissolved that weight in two days entirely by long walks and abstention from food. It was a punishing ordeal, a bitter experience. I did not win the race, and after it was over I felt just as though eating, so far as I was concerned, were a perfectly superfluous accomplishment. My stomach revolted at what I had or had not done for it: a little soup and fish satisfied my needs for many hours. That is the worst of "wasting"—there is a reaction (especially after we have lost) which is almost as bad as the original pangs of hunger. One may have dreams of gorgeous banquets during the night; they are not "filling."

A few years ago, when in France, I was compelled to do a lot of hard work before I could ride 9 st. 12 lb. in the Auteuil Hurdle Race, won by that fine horseman, Captain Bewicke, on "Soliman"; and soon afterwards I rode "St Maclou" (of course, at 9 st.) in the Derby for the late Mr M'Calmont. Some severe attenuation had to be practised in order to achieve that feat.

The reward was meagre. "St Maclou" had lost his action, and was scarcely able to stride over a straw. I was pleased that I did not meet a large number of straws whilst coming down Tattenham Corner in a somewhat tottery manner. To take part in that exhibition I was obliged to remove 6 or 7 lbs. of my own tissue in a hurry. It is, happily, more easily recovered.

My advice to young jockeys as to the subject under notice is that, if they must waste—and few of us can resist the temptation of riding a "good thing" even at a lower weight than Nature has prescribed for us—they should do so by walking, not by Turkish baths or physic. The fresh air is always an advantage. A strong man—assuming that he is not exclusively strong in his appetite—can do without food for a time and not be a sufferer. Many stout and pursy burghers—this phrase is strictly protected—would be better in health if they had the muzzle on occasionally, and were only allowed to eat when their shrieks became intolerable to their leaner neighbours.

A curious fact is, too, that the more you "waste" when young, the heavier you are likely to get when old. Nature revenges herself on us for having taken liberties with her when we

knew no better. Thus, to make the story clear, I am acquainted with several trainers who used to ride at a light weight not so long ago, and are now ponderous enough to please the most wayward or exacting fancy. I do not propose to mention their names ; it would be unfair on the others ; and, besides, those heavy friends have usually a heart of gold. If the weight were only in their pocket !

Nor do I quite agree with the assertion often propounded that numbers of jockeys have been (and are being) killed by " wasting." Though I cannot speak of times long passed, I can say that I have known very few jockeys whom " wasting " has destroyed ; and, in my own case, I do not think it has injured my health at all. Many tumbles have been infinitely more disastrous. To be " outed " at the ditch in the familiar one act —well, that is rather more trying to the system than a series of long walks and an absence from the table when it is groaning—I have copied the words—with good cheer.

" What you want," an old trainer said to his little jockey weeping for food, " what you want is not a good dinner, but simply a good sniff of it, and if you dare to come here again on such an errand "—he waved his big stick truculently—" I

shall treat your back, not your belly, to a suitable dressing."

Nothing has ever been written by a genuine expert about the humours of "wasting," but a great deal might be penned on this theme for the illumination of the public mind as to the strange issues involved. They are immensely interesting. And it is better to have a saddle under us than a stone on top—our usual fate if we go too far in the wrong direction and return too late.

A small hero, who rode winners as if he were born under a manger and cradled in the pigskin, was instructed by his master, the worthy trainer, to get 4 lbs. off at once, so that he might accept an eligible mount and help to swell the coffers (he was an apprentice) of his shrewd employer of labour. "You may keep me without money," groaned the imp, "which you do, but you must not keep me without food, and if you do so I shall b—blubber myself to d—death." After missing three meals he attempted to carry out that threat, crying bitterly in a recumbent position with a bit of raw carrot in his mouth, concealed there by a master stroke of cunning, when the fact became obvious to the meanest capacity that he was not a born "waster." He

had not been reared in a manger, so to speak, for nothing.

"All you think about, my lad," the trainer growled, "is a juicy joint, and, if it is supremely juicy with plenty of brown fat, you don't care how much weight you put on so long as it is all in one place—your blessed stomach."

Yet, verily, great jockeys are not made by gravy alone, and an apprentice who cannot do without roast goose to an excessive extent—and a growing boy's appetite is naturally monstrous—is not likely to achieve classical or other distinction. Unless he is able to maintain a weasel-like appearance and attenuation, his success in the pigskin is virtually impossible so far as racing on the flat is concerned.

As to this question, moreover, I recall the particulars of a case at a Midland race meeting where one of the jockeys failed to draw his right weight when he returned to scale after winning in a trot. He seemed to be considerably light, and a cry of "Fetch the bridle," attracted attention. So, unduly stimulated, a wag exclaimed: "Yes, and fetch the horse, and also a fat man to hold him down when his wriggles become very desperate."

A funny story is likewise told concerning an

ingenious punter who, having followed the advice of a firm of tipsters, found that he was money out of pocket. Smarting from his wounds, he sought out those prophets—one of them described himself as "late jockey," and the other said he had been a head lad riding trials—for the purpose of testing their position and veracity. They did not expect his visit, or no doubt they would have made arrangements for his reception. "My first tipster, the 'late jockey,'" he said, "was about 16 st., and the one who was riding trials had a wooden leg, also a wooden head, so between the two stools—I mean fools—no wonder I came to the ground with no end of a crash."

V

SOME RIDES ABROAD

V.—SOME RIDES ABROAD

My foreign experiences in the saddle have been sufficiently picturesque and diversified. I have ridden in France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Holland, and Ireland, having been successful in all those countries. It is a fact, too, that I have "sampled the soil" in each—that is, horses have fallen with me there, or on me, or all over me, according to the luck of the moment. Escapes by the skin of my teeth have been numerous. Yet, happily, my Continental adventures do not include any broken limbs. "Tosses" of infinite variety there have been certainly, together with one or two "good shakings"—not a "good thing" for any man who is not in hard condition—but I have always been able to face the music, so to say, when it became a question of weighing out for the next race. The weighing in, after a nice win, is not less agreeable.

As for Ireland, where I have done fairly well

in a general way, I won the first two-year-old race at Leopardstown on "Theophilus," and rode the same day in a hurdle race, being unable to bring off the double event. One cannot always expect to perform prodigies of valour even on a 2-lb. saddle. I went to Holland pretty frequently in my early youth, and remember my father once giving me the bare railway fare to get there with in the most luxurious manner possible. "You'll make plenty to get back with," he remarked, "or if you don't, you ought to swim your passage home." It was not necessary for me to undertake that terrible ordeal. I rode a few winners, made a little money, and one Dutch owner wanted to pay me twice. He discovered his mistake just in time, otherwise he might have followed me to South Hatch.

At that period the value of the stakes run for in Holland was small, and some of the meetings were conducted in rather a rural or primitive fashion. The programme was mixed. Thus a brother jockey, who had been riding in a remote part of that country, gave me a funny account of the revelry. He said: "We began racing at about nine in the morning, and went at it all day with desperate energy and animation. First there was a trotting competition for funeral horses,

then a wrestling match in the chuck-as-chuck-can style, next my race—a 7-mile steeplechase, in the course of which I slipped into a canal, and was rescued by my spurs when going down for the last time—then a speed trial for frowsy females, and after that there was a man hanged!"

So he went on, his imagination being vivid, to give an account of a long day's racing in Holland; his description is probably a trifle overdone. I have never seen a man hanged as an ordinary feature of such an entertainment. In fact, my recollections of Holland and also of Belgium are pleasant enough, even if the auriferous results—perish the sordid motive!—have not encouraged me to feel that sense of wealth which enables a jockey to realise that he is not tossed about for naught.

Nor have I any reason to complain of lack of success in France. I won the Paris Hurdle Race on "Count Schomberg," who was the best hurdle race-horse (with the possible exception of "Soliman") that I have ever ridden. I also had a good week at Auteuil—it is delightful to think about—where I had a retainer, and steered several winners, including the Prix de Drag on "Cadiz," a really useful horse owned by Mr Holtzer, and trained by J. Cole at Chantilly. At the same

meeting I was third in the big steeplechase on "Cadiz," who was a very consistent performer. It is always a pleasure to ride when both horse and man are doing their best; if their class is all serene they are not unlikely to emerge from the combat with *éclat*.

"Bay Comus"—one of the best 2-mile 'chasers in this country—gave me a couple of painful shocks in France. I rode him in a steeplechase at Auteuil, when, almost running away—nobody could hold him properly—he hit the post and rails very hard, and had a lovely fall. I thought that I should never cease revolving. It was a cruel *bouleversement*. Bones and back ached to such an extent that even the spinal marrow seemed to be injuriously affected. But we were merely down, not down-hearted. "Bay Comus" ran over the same course a day or two after, and though he took special care not to hit the rail a second time, he fell at the bank, so that my revolutions began again worse than ever. My bruises and soreness were not inconsiderable. After consciousness was restored, even if there were not smiles all round, the owner of "Bay Comus" remarked nonchalantly: "We will give him another run in about a week's time."

"Thank you, sir," I replied, still smarting,

"but I'm going home. Let me introduce you to another jockey." . . . Pernicious "crumplers" are not easily paid for even by abundant coin of the realm.

For Mr Beit I won the Baden-Baden Steeplechase on "Pampero," who was formerly owned by Lord Molyneux. That was the last time professional jockeys were eligible to take part in that performance. The course wanted a bit of doing, as the phrase is; if it were half done there was sure to be trouble. We had, for example, to climb up a steep hill, holding on as best we could round our mounts' necks; having scaled the heights, we galloped along the top for about a quarter of a mile, jumped two fences, and then dashed down the other side. It was quite an exhilarating adventure. The jockey who dropped first—I mean who reached the bottom of the hill first—generally won the race, and he deserved all he got for doing so, even if (like me in Holland) he were very nearly paid twice. It has ever been a bitter regret of mine that I stayed the hand of that close-fisted Dutchman. If he had only come to South Hatch we might have enlightened him as to the impropriety of allowing jockeys to touch his gold more than once, or to see it after closing time. He seemed to have a

piece of string or a fish-hook attached to everything which he promised to give away.

Whilst, as intimated, I never sustained a fall abroad that damaged me beyond hope of redemption—and I have ridden there over all sorts of extraordinary courses—I had my share of tumbles. I have fallen at (and into) the brook, over the stone wall, at the double post and rails, and at the bank, notably at Auteuil; and Providence must have been looking after a meritorious jockey in a foreign land on those occasions. "A fair old buster" was the description given of one severe "purler" taken by this modest Historian, and the speaker was an expert—that is, he had been pretty thoroughly "busted" himself. Only sportsmen who have been through the ordeal know what it is to come out of it with one's vital spark, such as it is, still flourishing. "A horse," said an old jockey, "does not roll on you with an idea of doing you any good, and if you are dragged out looking something like a pancake, do not blame the noble beast—he has done his best." A little better, and there might have been promising material for an inquest on neutral territory. There is always somebody ready to identify the corpse.

At Auteuil, too, "Chippeway" fell with me at

the stone wall, but I got up, remounted, and finished the race in style. There was a little applause for that enterprising pilot; the punters were eager to express their appreciation, though it went no further. Another time, however, at the same meeting, they did not treat me with equal generosity. I was third in a big steeplechase, when it was basely alleged against me that I had bored a jockey across the course in order to attain that position, and my number was never put up. What I had done was simply to pick the best going. How was I to help it if the other fellow got into my way and was forced to take the consequences? And I think they ought at least to have put my number up.

At Buda-Pesth I had a curious experience in connection with the starting-gate. It dragged me off my horse and threw me on my back. We were practising some horses at the gate before racing; only part of the apparatus went up, I was hung up in the other part, and came down with a terrible crash. Another of the usual "good shakings" was placed to the credit of my account. A second jockey entangled in the same webbing had nearly all the skin taken off one side of his face, but my fatal beauty was left unimpaired. What it has cost me, to be sure, in various ways!

A brief note as to starting may be interpolated here, though, strictly speaking, it does not come under the category of foreign adventure. I had the mount on "Go On" (dam of "Polar Star") in a selling race at Lewes, and there was a considerable delay at the post. Mr Coventry considered that he had a legitimate grievance against several of the jockeys engaged, and a result of his reporting them was that they were fined. My own penalty to be paid amounted to no less than twenty-five pounds, though I was not conscious of having done anything worth the money. Hence I was left in the unenviable position of having won that race, and being about a "tenner" out of pocket on the deal. The sympathy of friends was precious to me at that crisis. They could not have been kinder in their attitude if they had intended to pay the money themselves — which is not what happened. Truly, they remembered that cash in fob is never out of place.

My rides abroad were, as will be perceived, fairly successful and interesting. I certainly look back on them with a great deal of pleasure. A serpentine sportsman once startled me, however, at Monte Carlo by informing me confidentially that I should ride very well if I knew how to do

it much better, and that some of my finest finishes were not begun soon enough to make them irresistible. He asked what I thought of the idea. I answered that if he had any much better ideas he ought to bottle them up for consumption by lunatics, and enter the gates of the first aslyum he met large enough to gratify his preposterous appetite.

VI

A FEW NOTABLE MOUNTS

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THERE are some rides which provide us with a budget of agreeable reminiscences, even if we do not see the fox killed, or carry home a pad triumphantly, just as there are other rides which leave us with a sense of futility—our horse may have "turned it up" when the pinch came—if not with the consciousness of a damaged person.

A trip to Scarborough pleased me greatly in the year 1884. My father sent me thither with a two-year-old called "Stonefall," which he trained for Sir Simon Lockhart. I had sole charge of the youngster, travelled in the same box with him, "dressed" him, looked after him generally, as if he had been a priceless work of art, and rode him in his race. I felt like Napoleon at 5 st. 7 lb. with a spear in each hand.

My worthy sire encouraged us to do all the hard work ourselves. "I wish you," he said, "to learn the business thoroughly and practically

from A to Z and backwards, so that no letter of the alphabet may be unfamiliar to you in the heat of conflict." Verily we must go through the mill, it seems, before we can grasp much grist.

My mount on "Stonefall" at Scarborough was successful, and that was the first race which Sir Simon Lockhart won, though he had been racing for several years. He was kind enough to give me a pearl and horse-shoe pin in acknowledgment of my all-round efforts to achieve a victory at that meeting. Napoleon could not have felt so happy after sacking the nearest city. I seemed to be smothered in jewellery, an absolutely coruscating figure, when I wore that pin for the first time. If anybody had told me that the paddock glittered with my effulgence—and some rare wits find shelter there between the races after the supplies of Irish stew begin to fall off—I should not have complained to him that he was guilty of what is elegantly termed "swank." One's cross-buttock is often belated.

After that initial triumph with "Stonefall" I rode him in several other races and was not so fortunate. We kept dropping across Fred Archer and "Pearl Diver." At Derby, for instance, the last-named colt, steered by the

greatest jockey of his day, beat me and "Stonefall" with some degree of ease; we were third, and a little later, at Brighton, they administered the same dose to us again. We were third once more. I began to be heartily tired of Fred Archer and "Pearl Diver"; they showed us no mercy at any part of the contest.

So far as that Brighton sprint is concerned, I recollect that we were at the post for three-quarters of an hour in sleet and rain, when Archer was as cool and nonchalant throughout as if the elements were conspiring to place him at the head of the Government. He did not object to being drenched to the skin if there were an adequate solatium at the other end. He took up an outside position, wanting no better; immediately the flag was dropped he dashed in front, right across us, as it were, and soon had us safely "boxed." What a marvellous genius he was, to be sure, in regard to all points of the game! "Pearl Diver" was very quick out of the slips, and had fine speed. Indeed, one of those wits in the paddock—see previous canto, introducing the Irish stew—said to me, after my defeat on "Stonefall" as recorded: "Well, you *have* been taking something on. I wonder you don't pick out a few more superb champions

and try to crush them all in a promiscuous melée." . . . My reply was lost in the mist.

At Liverpool, in 1888, I rode in one of the most closely-contested matches ever witnessed there or on any other course. The runners were Mr H. T. Fenwick's "Bertha" (four years old, 10 st. 4 lb.) and Mr R. Moncrieff's "Hettie" (five years, 11 st.). The distance was 2 miles over hurdles; the betting was 11 to 10 on "Bertha," ridden by W. Nightingall, though my mount, "Hettie," had a very large number of followers. The wagering was exceedingly brisk and spirited; people scarcely knew which to back until they had made their investment, and then regretted their precipitancy. After a tremendous tussle brother William just beat me by a neck, and the "form" of the two horses worked out most correctly. Few more genuinely sporting matches —and we do not see many of them now—than the one described have ever been run. The loser was not forgotten when the awards of merit were distributed.

Curiously enough, I rode the winner of the last steeplechase at the old Croydon Meeting in November 1890, and also the last flat race there in October 1890, on Mr H. Heasman's "Lamprey," beating M. Cannon (second) on

"Jarretieres." I won the steeplechase of 3 miles on "Old Malt," and likewise secured a hurdle race the same day on "Happy Go Lucky," who had been bought by a member of the Sporting Press for a small sum. Again, curiously—unless I take a distorted view of these thrilling matters—"Happy Go Lucky" was ridden in his trial (2 miles over hurdles in Tadworth Park) by another member of the Sporting Press not unconnected with this inimitable chronicle; and with such celebrities at work, of course, defeat was out of the question. We said "Good-bye" to Woodside with regret. We left off a winner—like the man who married a third time and buried his wife the same year—preferring that method of exit, if possible, rather than to leave with a sense of having thrown up the sponge; and, truth to tell, we packed up a nice little parcel, so to speak, with which to make the journey home more festive. Such packages are not so easy to come by now judging from the trifling amount of personal luggage some of us travel with from one course to another. If we are not discovered under the seat!

"Courtier" was a good horse for me. He also belonged to Sir Simon Lockhart, and, ridden by your humble servant, he won the Sandown Grand

Prize in 1887. He had previously taken a less important race of the same kind, and just as we were anticipating additional victories for him he —it is an old story—broke down. Pity it was, too, because he was by way of being a real "smasher." Particulars of his trial seemed to have leaked out to some extent—although my father, who trained "Courtier," was always most careful and cautious in that respect—and at his first essay in public the price was rather cramped. He won all right, so what did aught else matter? The glow of conquest is better than the touch of gold. As a destitute punter remarked, with his head in his chest: "A winner is a winner, even if you have to pawn most of your wife's *lingerie* to back it with." But such drastic measures are not likely to make home happy, least of all when the weather is arctic.

Not so long ago, at a cross-country meeting, I saw a jockey pull his horse up about half a mile from home, and when I asked the reason, he said that he had broken a stirrup leather. That set me thinking, as our French friends say, "furiously." If any one had offered me a penny or two for my thoughts he might not have been gratified by the magnanimity of my response. I once rode "Ballot Box" with only one stirrup

iron for 3¼ miles in a valuable steeplechase. One leather snapped directly after the start, so I did the rest of the journey as mentioned, and, what is more, I won. Did they applaud me until the good old welkin rang again? Alas, no; few bouquets were strewn in my path. In sooth, an eminent connoisseur—who knew what he had seen after the procession had turned the corner—informed me with a gesture of despair that I had won too far, thus showing the horse up, and that, as a consequence, he would get more weight for the "National." And that, two, after my riding 3 miles over a big country with one iron! My sensations were not, for the moment, rhapsodical. What would have happened—such was my instant reflection—if the girths had burst and I had returned with them in my arms after just winning a desperate race by the quiver of a nostril? In that event I should have been accused probably of tergiversation at the post, or maligned for not having come the shortest way with the girths round my neck. Jockeys have certainly something to put up with when their performances are a trifle less than heroic. "Wasting" and wastefulness are not their only annoyances.

My ride on "Donative" in a hurdle race at

Gatwick was unexpectedly successful. According to the betting, I was not assumed to be on the course. Pretty nearly every runner — and there were many, some of superior credentials —was fancied more than mine was; almost any price—save, perhaps, "German Odds," which, I am informed, run into noble figures — could have been obtained against "Donative." He was reputed to be uncertain, coy, and hard to please — also fickle and a bit of a "welsher." Yet in a fast-run race he was quite ready when I asked him to go to the front; and he won cleverly. He was then owned by Mr H. Macksey, the once well-known trainer and jockey, who recently went to Buenos Ayres. I shall not be surprised to learn that he astonished the natives to some extent in those parts after he had become acclimatised, since he is a perfect master of his art in every way. Natives who strive to speak first are not likely to say much—not until the wrangle has been decided against them.

At a meeting in the Midlands, where I won a hurdle race on "Tours," the owner of the second objected to me for boring, or something of that kind. His jockey — a gentleman rider with whom I was friendly—had tried to come

up on the inside; and, of course, I was obliged to check that nefarious enterprise. A jockey must not try to come up on the inside unless he is sure of getting there. That objection was promptly overruled, my strenuous efforts thus not being stultified. It was delightful. Calm restored, money paid—the finest restorative in these and similar cases — wine consumed to celebrate the event, and so forth, we naturally felt more cheerful. Then that gentleman jockey —one of the best who had ridden the second best—shook hands with me affectionately, and said: "It's all right, Arthur, my boy; if I had been in your place I should have done worse than you did." Was that a compliment for me, or a sort of *feu de joie* at my expense?

VII

"ILEX"

ILEX. (The Author up).

VII.—"ILEX"

My first meeting with "Ilex" was full of picturesque, if not romantic, incident. I was engaged to ride at the Leicester Meeting in 1888, when, walking round the paddock, I noticed a queer-looking chestnut horse evidently there to run. He seemed to have no neck, no quarters, and, as an expert observed, with a rare flash of insight, "He's not all quality—he's all belly." The coarseness of the phrase may be excused on account of its expressing the truth. He was heavily bandaged, and — eager to be up and doing, with a heart for any fate—I accepted the mount on him in a selling hunters' steeplechase. Even so, if I had not promptly weighed out for him, I should not have had the ride, since a gentleman who owned horses in our stable offered to pay me the equivalent of the fee in the event of my consenting to stand down. "You must want a 'fiver' very badly," he said, "if you are willing to risk your neck on a brute like that." My reply was to the

effect (if my memory does not deceive me) that if I did not risk my neck somebody else would risk his, and that a neck-or-nothing policy was sometimes delectable. It was so on this occasion.

After, accordingly, riding "Ilex" out of the paddock to compete in that selling hunters' steeplechase, I was stopped on the course by his owner, who calmly removed two pairs of bandages from each fore-leg. "They are more ornamental," he explained, "than useful, and you can win by the length of a street without them." Upon my word, I believe that was not an exaggerated estimate of our potentialities. At any rate, "Ilex" won that race in a canter; he was not fully extended, and I had the laugh of my friends when we came back. Judging from appearances—I mean from the appearance of "Ilex," my own being above suspicion—we had no chance at all. The critics were astonished, punters were abashed, and when that combination is routed, we have certainly reason to assume that a bit of a cataclysm has just cleared the air. It is occasionally rather oppressive near Tattersall's enclosure.

Thus revivified—because what a jockey lives for is to ride a winner—I pursued my profession

with the usual gusto—taking a toss here and a toss there as if I were born to be thrown about with impunity, as so much decayed vegetable matter—and I next rode "Ilex" in a big steeplechase at Leopardstown. He could get no nearer than third, the winner being "Kilworth," who was steered by the late Captain Owen, a fine, determined horseman.

But, evidently, Fate had decreed that "Ilex" and I were not to be kept long asunder. The next I heard of him was that he was going up to be sold at Tattersall's. I went there to see him before the sale, and, being satisfied with that inspection, I advised the late Mr George Masterman to buy him with a view to "National" honours. He failed, however, to reach the reserve; so, still acting on my inspiration, Mr Masterman purchased him privately for a comparatively modest sum. The history of that deal might read like a page of romance if it were set out *in extenso*; but as I am no romancer, the wisest plan is to adhere to the chronicle of sober facts. They are not always so interesting as the others, yet they seem to wear better, especially in print.

Having changed hands as related, "Ilex" was sent to my father at Epsom to be trained. It

was then summer-time, and I hacked him about for two or three months, greatly to my own satisfaction and his benefit. He improved wonderfully, the treatment suited him, and, though he had a funny mouth, he was quite a beautiful hack. Not everybody could ride him. He was apt to slip off incontinently or without warning if his jockey were rough and upset him; he could easily upset the man on his back if his plumage were ruffled. But we always got on very well together. A horse and his jockey, unlike a fool and his money, ought not to be soon parted if both are gifted with the usual amount of commonsense allowed by Act of Parliament.

Put into training again, "Ilex" was duly entered for the Grand National of 1890 when he was six years old. He ran once unsuccessfully at Sandown before he went to Aintree, where his weight for the Cross-country Championship was 10 st. 5 lb. We did not regard that impost as at all prohibitive. In his final gallop before the race he achieved a wonderfully smart performance. He was sent 4½ miles over our private steeplechase course at Walton; he was led for the first 2½ miles by "Swindler," who was a good 3-mile horse, and then "Willie Blair"—who could win 2-mile handicap steeplechases

with 12 st. 7 lb. on his back—took him along to the end, finishing over the three big ditches.

"Ilex" did all that he was expected to do; it was eminently satisfactory. At least, a patron of the stable who saw that gallop dashed straight off to London at once for the purpose of backing the horse, and I do not think that he experienced any difficulty in getting his money on at a nice price. His sudden departure caused us no surprise. He had assuredly seen something good enough to bet on till the bookmakers trembled; and that is, I am informed by respectable authorities, always a sight good for sore eyes. How much better, then, if one's vision is absolutely clear? I rode "Ilex" in the Walton gallop, my brother William was on "Willie Blair," whilst "Swindler" was steered by my cousin, Mark Ward.

And so, full of hope and confidence and enthusiasm, we arrived safely at Liverpool with our candidate for premier honours. "Ilex" was very fit and well that day; my riding orders were short and simple. "Always lie well up in front with them," said my father; and I may affirm without egotism—or, if with it, I can only crave for absolution—that I carried out those instructions to the letter. I was never out of the

first three. I came to the front about a mile from home, was never headed from that point, and, indeed, when I got to the racecourse, I was so far ahead that I did not hear Halsey shout out to me to "save a suit of clothes with him." He rode "Pan," second. How easily I won my first Grand National is not to be appraised by the mere number of lengths recorded in history, but I could have pulled "Ilex" up and trotted past the post. He never put a foot wrong, or made the slightest semblance of a mistake during the whole of that long, tiring journey. I never hit him. It was lovely.

After that great victory, "Ilex" won the rich Lancashire Steeplechase at Manchester, with 14 lb. extra and me again on his back. That was rather a lucky win. "Royal Meath" would have been successful if he had not fallen at the last hurdle. Which reminds me, as the story-tellers say, that when some time afterwards I should have won at Auteuil on "Innisfail," if he had not come to grief at the final obstacle, thus letting up H. Beasley on "Royal Meath," I mentioned to that fine jockey that he was lucky to secure the spoils. "Well, sure," he said, "and didn't I fall for you at Manchester? What more d'ye want?"

In the next Grand National (1891), "Ilex" had 12 st. 5 lb. to carry, and even with that considerable impost, he was backed for a lot of money. He was obliged to put up with third place. "Cloister," with 12 st., was second, and, in my humble opinion, "Ilex" was a better horse over the Liverpool course than "Cloister." In the following year, carrying 12 st. 7 lb., "Ilex" was third again, but the fact must be remembered that he had not really done a gallop for a fortnight before he ran. He was third practically on three legs; one was what is technically called "a swinger." When we got him home his fetlock was nearly on the ground. He was in plaster of Paris for weeks to keep his leg up. It was impossible for us to train him again properly after that trouble, so his career as a steeplechaser —absolutely the best I ever rode—was virtually ended. I shall always cherish a most loving memory for this great horse.

During several happy seasons when his racing days were over, I used "Ilex" as a hack and hunter; he was extremely useful in both capacities. One could not put him out of his place. He was a "nailer" with hounds. Hunting men who did not know him often asked me where I had got my jumper from, and when I

modestly informed them that he was only a "National" winner, just that and nothing more, their astonishment was obvious. I enjoyed a lot of fun and good sport with "Ilex" in the hunting-field, together with many amusing incidents, but they belong more suitably to a separate chapter. We must not put all our eggs into one basket, even if it is a good, strong basket, and the eggs are fresh.

At last, age and infirmity came upon "Ilex," as they come on all of us, no matter how virtuously we may have lived, and I was compelled to have him shot when he was about fifteen years old. It was a blow to me, if a release for him, but we cannot trifle with certain fatal matters. They are sure to beat us in the end, despite our strenuous efforts to come up for another round. After I had won the "National" on "Ilex," Mr Masterman made me the handsome present of one thousand pounds. He also returned me the cheque from his bank after it had gone through, and I was foolish enough to have it framed. It does not always suggest, at present, the most cheerful reflections. If it could only be cashed again!

"Ilex," I may mention, was by Restrevor, a useful Irish horse, and he was out of Rostrom's

dam, as to whom I possess no information. My idea is that she must have been a rare good sort. Some of the superfine critics, who ride well in a Pullman car with a rug over their knees, objected to "Ilex" at first on the ground that he showed a lack of quality, whilst a few alleged that he was not a thoroughbred horse, but they changed their note appreciably when they saw what he could do. He was as game as a pebble right through. He never made a mistake with me in any of those "Nationals" in which I rode him; he finished the last time resolutely as ever on three legs; he always did his best. The "short 'uns" he could put in at the fences, if necessary, were marvellous. As an admirer affirmed: "He's a horse and a half, and the last half is the best bit of him." When shall we—or, at least, I—look on his like again? As honest as a Christian, if not more so than some of them, with a heart as big as a mountain, never throwing up the sponge until he could stagger about with it no longer, so to say, a magnificent "lepper," and a noble "doer," "Ilex"—I shall never forget him, never!—was certainly the ideal 'chaser. He was a gentleman from the tip of his nose to the top (or end) of his tail.

VIII

TRAINING EXPERIENCES

VIII.—TRAINING EXPERIENCES

It is a common saying that good horses make good trainers, and what bad horses make—well, the subject is too painful to contemplate. One may have, for instance, a good horse or two with bad legs; they could win anything if it were possible to train them; but back tendons and suspensory ligaments are a constant difficulty—something is always going wrong with those works, and the most drastic remedies are often useless. It is then a trainer begins to tear his hair, or what is left of it; he is reckless as to hirsute damages. His life would be a sort of sporting elysium, with a winner here and there, with wagers landed, if it were not for bad legs. Not his own, *bien entendu;* he may be personally immaculate in that department, with calves massive enough to excite the admiration of a large number of foolish females; but when the "flyer" of his stable develops a "swinger" just as he is being wound up to win a valuable stake

—it is good enough to bet on as if there were no settling day—small wonder that the poor trainer plays havoc with such thatch as remains.

His dreams, his most horrible dreams, are of bad legs. It would be easy, indeed, to train race-horses if they were all perfectly sound, a gratuitous hypothesis, but, like men, many have a screw or two loose in unsuspected places. When we ask them a serious question, they say "Yes" or "No," "Not to-day, baker," emphatically, any other reply being impracticable in the trying circumstances—it is a case of dot and carry one when our hopes are rampant—and the response is, as hinted, often final—I mean fatal. Just as we are preparing to bet with animation, perhaps on credit, bang goes the "swinger."

A curious fact to be noted in this association is that many good race-horses have bad legs; whilst, if you get an animal that could not win a saddle and bridle at a country fair with a postage stamp on his back, you could not break him down by galloping him persistently on the hard road. Such are the ironies of a trainer's portion. They are to be scheduled amongst the manifold inconsistencies which help to make his life so intensely speculative. I have been through the mill. One learns to take the rough with

the smooth, the fat with the lean, whilst rolling about with a horse in close proximity, if not actually on top. He does not try to hurt us, but he often succeeds in doing so. A few groans are not considered *infra dig.* or irrelevant even in the ambulance, yet their bitterness is discounted ere we reach the Grand Stand—probably unconscious.

Not satisfied with being actively employed as a steeplechase jockey—which is occupation enough for three men until they are killed—I began to train race-horses, chiefly jumpers, towards the back-end of the year 1892. Of course, I also rode them in their work on the Downs, in their schooling practice over fences, in such trials as were necessary, and in their races. The general stable management was likewise solely in my hands; there was no festive aide-de-camp to throw out a few indiscriminate hints when he had no idea what to say.

My hours were filled to the last possible moment. I was either in the saddle, in the train, in the weighing-room, or riding a desperate finish; I did not seem to be often enough in bed. It was a rather wearing life. Severe shakings did not contribute to my felicity. As a friend said to me once: "Do not try, my boy, to burn

the candle at both ends, or the snuffers will be brought for you, and it will be *your* vital spark that is extinguished." But what is the use of making a feeble splutter only when one feels capable of a more glorious illumination? Lights that burn low do not always last the longest. And a few purple patches repay us for many desolate interludes. There is nothing like riding a winner to drive dull care away. What are the odds, so to speak, if the net result is satisfactory?

I commenced to train horses (in addition to riding them) in the stables formerly occupied by Robert I'Anson, the once eminent cross-country jockey and trainer, at Burgh Heath, near Epsom. I soon had my hands full and few boxes empty. Success, too, was not long in coming; fortune favoured me almost at the first time of asking. To the Plumpton February Meeting, 1893, I sent Mr F. Statham Hobson's "Eversfield," who won a race there quite comfortably. He was the first winner that I both trained and rode myself: it was rather a joyful experience, and if I felt slightly "up in the stirrups" afterwards—only for a few moments, of course—there was some excuse, perhaps, for that temporary elation. Friends congratulated me with effusion, for "Eversfield" had been well backed. Another

horse—Captain A. de Vere Smith's "Euston"—also trained and ridden by me, was second at the same meeting in a maiden hurdle race, so that, as will be perceived by my sagacious readers, I made a fairly good start in the dual capacity indicated.

The best hurdle race horse I ever had in my stable was Mr J. M. Hanbury's "Ben Wyvis." He was an exceedingly smart and consistent performer. For example, at Warwick, I won on him the Tally-ho Hurdle Race, carrying 12 st. 2 lb., and on the following day, at the same fixture, I won the Castle Hurdle Handicap on "Ben Wyvis," carrying no less than 13 st. 2 lb., and beating a large field of useful, strenuous competitors. Amongst other remunerative successes that followed for jumpers trained and ridden by me was the victory of "Euston" at Plumpton, at the March Meeting there, 1893, also that of Lord Marcus Beresford's "Marcellus" in the Stanley Five-year-old Steeplechase at Liverpool, and that of Mr Walter Blake's "Romeo" in the Trent Hurdle Race at Nottingham. These early triumphs were very encouraging; they stimulated an appetite for more. A win is a win, especially when you train and ride the winner yourself. The ecstasy of owner-

ship is an additional tit-bit not often tasted in this combination. We cannot expect to have all the good things of life in a cluster—not even when we are turning out winners with automatic precision and do not mind having a flutter with the money.

In 1894 I had the great honour of training for His Majesty the King. A mare called "The Vigil" belonging to the King was sent to me to be prepared for her jumping engagements, and, though she was useful, I had no luck with her. She was made favourite for the Sandown Grand Prize, but she rolled over with me at one of the hurdles, and a lot of money was left in the mud that day. My sensations, mental and physical, were not hilarious after that pernicious "purler." The King was the first to meet me near the paddock, and asked if I were hurt. Naturally I felt highly gratified by such gracious consideration on His Majesty's part; and I was hurt, as the saying is, more in purse than person.

"The Vigil" only ran once after that whilst I trained her, her next appearance in public being in a hurdle race, when she ran second. She was then sold to go to Belgium, being successful in the big steeplechase at Brussels. Her jockey on that occasion was Fred Hassall, a

dashing man over fences; he is now "schooling" young hunters in Cheshire, and, needless to add, he is doing it very well. Lord Marcus Beresford thought that "The Vigil" was not good enough for the King to keep, and I was very sorry that I was unable to win a race with her in the Royal colours. But for that fall at Sandown, leaving me and our money in the mud, a different story might have to be written. I should be pleased to turn over, instead of turning out, its pages.

"Lord William," a good-looking chestnut horse by Poulet, was the best 2-mile 'chaser that I ever trained. He had rather a curious career. He won one hurdle race, and soon after split his pastern in a gallop at home. We got him over that accident, however, and I hacked him about, finally putting him to the jumping business over the regulation fences. He was a hard-pulling, tear-away sort of customer—nobody could hold him — but he was a magnificent, natural "lepper," with a fine turn of speed. The first time he ran in a steeplechase was at Hurst Park in December 1895, when, ridden by Denby, who was employed by me, he won the Wentworth Handicap Steeplechase by twelve lengths, beating amongst others Mr J. Miller's "Shoot-away," a useful horse. On the following Monday

I sent "Lord William" to Manchester to run in the Trafford Park Handicap Steeplechase. I rode him there, and again he won in a canter: in effect, I could have safely trotted past the post if it had been possible to steady him to that extent. An estimate of the ease with which "Lord William" won that race may be formed when the fact is mentioned that all the runners except the first and second were actually pulled up and walked past the post.

Yet, brilliant as his credentials were as a 'chaser of the first class, "Lord William" certainly wanted a lot of riding. He used to jump splendidly whilst running away; one could only sit still and let him go; he never made a mistake. He often took off before he ought to have done so, some distance before reaching the fence; but, mercifully, he never tried to land until his footing was assured. There were no rolls-over, no leap-frog business, in the ooze.

At that period also I trained and rode a nice 3-mile steeplechase horse called "Query," who was the property of Lord Lovat. He did us several good turns. He was a game, genuine little animal that might always be depended on to do his best, and it was not so bad at that. On one occasion I recollect, after I had won on him

in what I conceived to be handsome style—an author's feelings of egotism do run away with him sometimes—my friend W. Dollery, who was second, objected to "Query" for having interfered with him, or something of that kind.

Now Dollery had ridden a big horse, mine was a small one, and I certainly should not have felt inclined to invite any tussling complications. The objection was overruled. It was the old story of a good little 'un against a big 'un not quite so good, both having their heart in the right place, and "Query" struggled on nobly to the last gasp. If there had only been more of him to electrify the punters!

IX

OWNERS I HAVE TRAINED FOR

IX.—OWNERS I HAVE TRAINED FOR

Soon after I began to train race-horses on my own account—as if riding them continuously in steeplechases and hurdle races were not enough work for one small Christian!—I had a number of aristocratic patrons who supported me loyally. They included the Prince of Wales, Lord Cholmondeley, Lord Marcus Beresford, Lady Edward Somerset, Lord Lovat, Sir J. Dickson Poynder, the Hon. R. Ward, and others. I am glad to think that their appreciation of my services, both as trainer and jockey, was sufficiently cordial. We got on very well together. Many prizes were placed to the credit of their account, and no doubt they enjoyed a great deal of wholesome sport through this agency. Pleasure and profit are not always allied; but when they are so, it is an absolutely felicitous combination.

The first horse I trained was sent to me by the late Mr R. S. Evans. It was called "Thirsk,"

by Standard—Gisela, and just as my hopes were highest—since I had already captured several of the most important races in my mind—"Thirsk" broke down. His poor legs were unequal to the strain of being wound up to the necessary point of fitness. And, as an old trainer used to say at moments of exaltation, "I must have my horses as fit as other people's, or, when I try to beat other people's, they will give me fits, so to speak, in the course of a desperate encounter."

But one gradually recovers tone in the days of our youth, even after such a disappointment as that experienced in connection with "Thirsk." One's first breakdown is naturally very bitter; yet, alas, it is nothing as compared with what inevitably follows. Nature accommodates herself to the blow, and are we not all awaiting the final knock-out? Others we may dodge, but not that one, which is the sort of "shooter" sure to bowl us out at last.

For the late Mr Barney Barnato I trained the first race-horse he ever owned. It was not a good one; it could not go fast enough to make an impression on the leaders. The late Baron Hirsch also sent me an alleged "flyer," whose wings were found to be deficient—that is, his speed left so much to be desired when he was fully extended

that it was no use attempting to get him cherry-ripe. When he was fit he was not fast. Lord Cholmondeley sent me a nice-looking 'chaser called "Prince Henry," as to whom I have a vivid, if unpleasant, memory. He gave me a fall at the Vale of White Horse Meeting, and broke my collar-bone. The sting was not inconsiderable whilst it lasted. I can sometimes feel the effect of a few of those fractured limbs even now, especially when the wind is in the wrong quarter and Fortune frowns on me with no half-witted expression. Particulars of her smiles may be obtained on application at the box-office, enclosing the usual remittance for two.

For Mr R. Berridge I won the Tantivy Steeplechase at Gatwick on "Oughterard," a useful stamp of 'chaser and an agreeable ride. For Lady Edward Somerset, too, I annexed a hurdle race with a mare called "Lady Grace," by Petronel —Pussy, though she never soared into the top rank. I had a curious horse belonging to Sir J. Dickson Poynder. That was an animal named "Brookwood"; he was mad. Nobody could ride him with any degree of safety, as he used to rear and behave anywhere as if he were absolutely demented. Yet, under National Hunt Rules, he was able to give a fine show when in the humour.

He was as brilliant a jumper as a man need wish to sit on. We always had to lead him to the post, since that was our only chance of subduing his idiotic temperament. I was successful in winning two or three nice steeplechases on him, but the last time I rode him at Kempton, a disaster occurred which decided his fate. He was favourite on that occasion; I cleared the last fence in front, and then "Brookwood" took command. Instead of his going on to the hurdle racecourse, he went straight to the brook, thus, of course, extinguishing our chance, and I had a lively reception from a tempestuous section of the audience. They seemed to think that my erratic steering was not involuntary. Mud and stones were thrown at me, evil language was used, and, ah me! my proud spirit was vastly lacerated. I had done nothing wrong. The villain was "Brookwood," so I sold him at once to go abroad, fearing that if he did not kill me in one way he would assuredly ruin me in another. "He is dangerous all round," I remarked to his owner, "and it would be a pity not to give the foreigners an opportunity to wrestle with him, for death-grips are probably more in their line." To be pelted by the punters after doing one's best for them—how nauseating

to the bravest heart! I rejoiced to see the last of "Brookwood," as he had nearly seen the last of me, to say nothing of the humiliation endured: those mud-stains linger.

Mr H. "Westbury," the then assumed name of Mr Goodson, the well-known bookmaker, had a number of horses in my stable, and they won in, if not out of, their turn. "Lord William"—previously mentioned—belonged to him, whilst he also had "Syndic," with whom he won a lot of races; "J. B.," a horse that could go, and wouldn't, bless him! and "Dancing Laddie," who appropriated a two-year-old race at Epsom. I did not consider it desirable to take that mount myself, saying to the owner: "'Jack Watts' is good enough for me at a crisis like this"—there was plenty of money on; and "Jack Watts" certainly proved to be too good for the others who then opposed "Dancing Laddie." It was a "sweetening" victory, an artistic "touch." Others followed of equal succulence and merit. We did pretty well in a general way, and most of the notable results achieved were satisfactory.

Another staunch patron of mine was Mr H. Hyams. I trained many horses for him, and, according to the best of my recollection, they were all winners. That establishes, perhaps, a

sort of imperishable record for one stable. Among those I had owned by Mr Hyams were "Charles III."—an exceptionally useful animal —"Gloss," "Queen of the Chase," "Cameronian," "Sir John Broad," "King Charibert," "Pantagruel," "Rheingold," "Arran," and others. They performed consistently enough, and their triumphs were not unexpected. Though I say it myself—and of course I ought to be the last to make such a statement, hence it is advanced with perfect confidence—these horses were sent to the post fit to run for a man's life or money—both equally precious to him—when the local conditions were favourable, and their astute owner rejoiced in the prospect. In-an'-out performances were not to our taste. We were so fond of winning—it is a human weakness, no matter what the Stewards may think—that no stones were left unturned to consummate that enterprise. Our reverses were accepted with philosophical equanimity. Gold gone may be replaced. That is the best spirit to cultivate in association with racecourse transactions. Losses are not sent to make us bite the dust, either physically or metaphorically. After all, moreover, the money may be only lent.

On account of increased patronage and a larger

number of horses, I was obliged to remove from the stables at Burgh Heath to Priam Lodge, Epsom, where the late John Jones used to train the King's 'chasers; and my boxes were soon full. At one time I had no fewer than thirty-two jumpers in training at Priam Lodge. What amount of hard work that means for a man who is both trainer and jockey, who is constantly travelling about the country in the practice of his profession, who is obliged to undertake the general management of a large establishment, who does not refuse outside mounts if they seem to be desirable — well, it is easy to form an opinion as to the strain and wear and tear which such a life involves. A man must be pretty strong and fit to go through that mill and come out successfully, with both hands full of grist. Incidental casualties do not improve his chance of immortality. Expenses are heavy. Intervals for enjoyment are limited, and time spent on the domestic hearth is like that spent in the ambulance — absurdly out of proportion to the net results attained.

Still, all things considered, I look back on my training experiences with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. They were, on the whole, thoroughly successful, and, I believe,

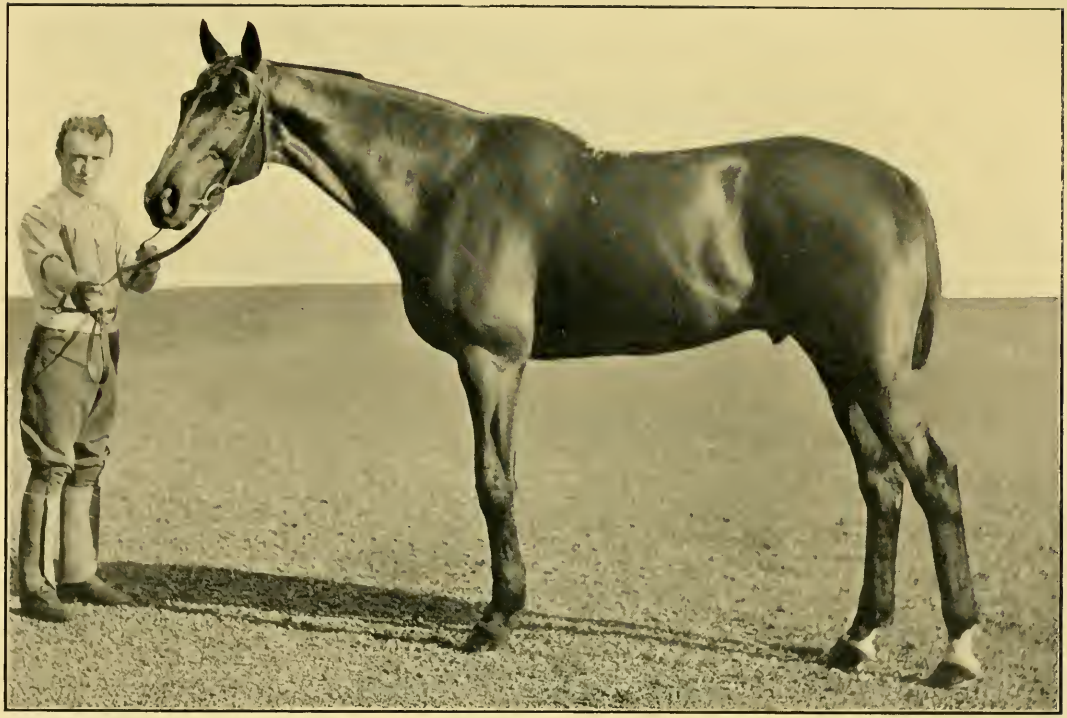
profitable for nearly all the sporting parties concerned. At any rate, there were "no complaints." Whilst training at Priam Lodge, I not only rode horses prepared there by myself, but I also steered many, as intimated, from other stables. Amongst what may be termed the outside winners — though they were not necessarily outsiders in a betting sense — were Mr F. D. Leyland's "Prioress," trained by Hardie, in the Preston Handicap Steeplechase at Plumpton, 14th March 1895; Mr A. Myburgh's "Innesheen," in the Village Hurdle Race, Sandown, March 1895, winner trained by Gray; Lord Rendlesham's "Theobald," at the Ipswich Hunt Meeting, winner trained by W. Nightingall; Mr C. Hibbert's "Snow Queen," Nottingham, February 1896, winner trained by W. Nightingall; Mr Lebaudy's "Count Schomberg," at Auteuil, in the Grand Hurdle Race, winner trained by Leader; Lord Shrewsbury's "Misanthropist," at Gatwick, in the Epsom Steeplechase, winner trained by W. Woodland; at the same meeting Lord Cowley's "Pardalo," in a Maiden Hurdle Race, winner trained by Gatland; and many others. They need not be recapitulated in wearisome detail. My wish

here is to deal only with the most sparkling events.

What induced me to relinquish the work of training was the death of my first wife, and after that bereavement, I went abroad for a time. But, with a little luck coming my way, I hope to regain my former position. Work has no terrors for me, my riding is still here, and my nerve is unimpaired. The rest we must leave in the lap of the gods.

X

"WHY NOT"



WHY NOT—Grand National Winner, 1894.

X.—"WHY NOT"

The fact is not a little curious that some of the best cross-country jockeys, such as Robert I'Anson and James Adams, have never ridden the winner of the Grand National, although they deserved to ride several, but the luck was persistently against them as regards that important race. Their mounts were not quite good enough. My own experiences at Aintree have been more fortunate, more exhilarating. Three brilliant 'chasers have been steered to victory by me in the great Liverpool event, and the hardest race of the lot was undoubtedly that which I won on Captain C. H. Fenwick's "Why Not." If my horse had not been one of the gamest of the game, with a heart as big as a mountain, we should not have got home. I was glad to reach there safely.

Prior to plunging into the sporting details and thrills of that grand encounter, I must mention that in the year 1893 I won the Sefton Steeplechase on "Why Not" for Captain Fenwick, the

horse's weight being 12 st. 1 lb., and his running pleased me so much that, in a short time afterwards, I accepted a retainer to ride him in the succeeding "National." He was trained by Mr W. H. Moore, who also prepared "Manifesto" and "The Soarer' when they won our cross-country championship, and who was, in his younger days, a first-class horseman over a country. His stories, by the way, relative to some of his racing adventures abroad are exceedingly humorous.

Once, on the old Baden steeplechase course, which represented a rough-and-tumble sort of journey, a certain jockey had stuck bits of paper at different points to mark out what he conceived to be the best route for himself, but in the actual race he found himself quite at sea—the paper had been changed! Somebody—who was it, Mr Moore?—had defeated his ingenious manœuvre. His chagrin was complete. Vanquished easily, he unfolded his woes to a friend after the race, saying: "They altered the chart for me at the last moment, and I got on the rocks, or"—his eyes flashed—"I should have wrecked them instead of being wrecked." Mr Moore tells the tale with considerable unction, as he tells many others to make people laugh heartily, and when

his time is not occupied in training "Manifestos" and "Soarers" to score at Aintree, he is capable of putting in some good work as an inimitable *raconteur*. If he fails to tickle their fancy, listeners are in a bad way.

"Why Not" had run more than once in the "National" before I had the mount on him there, and he had acquired a disagreeable habit of falling. He was ridden in his first essays by the late Mr C. Cunningham, who was in my opinion too long in the leg, although a fine horseman, to ride with success a short-legged horse like "Why Not." At any rate, their partnership was not felicitous; it was frequently dissolved.

To make the story clear, also, I must mention that the only fault in connection with "Why Not's" jumping was that he used to "pitch" on landing, especially over the large Liverpool fences, and it was necessary to sit well back on him, or trouble might easily result. The weight of a man on a horse's neck will help to throw him down if the animal "pitches" as described; and that was what I had to guard against particularly. It was not a very difficult job so far as I was personally concerned—I mean as to the "lepping." "Why Not" gave me no shocks that might not be reasonably scheduled as legitimate,

and part of the bill of fare. He jumped like a hero throughout; I sat well back, as already noted, with a due appreciation of the elegance of that entrancing attitude; we never suggested an impression that our fall was imminent. "Coming unglued," some of the frivolous jockeys call it, though I prefer to indulge in a more classical style of metaphor. One is as cheap as the other unless you attempt to tap a few of the more depraved sources of supply.

Nor was Mr Moore afraid to run "Why Not" in public before he was stripped to compete in the Grand National. For example, on 16th March 1894, I won a 3-mile steeplechase at Kempton on him, and on the 29th of the same month he achieved his great Aintree triumph. That system of giving a "Liverpool" candidate a gallop or two with the colours on in public ere he is called on to make his supreme effort is, according to my judgment, excellent. I have known bottled-up horses that were no good when, as it were, the cork was drawn. There was not much of an explosion, only a bit of a fizzle. A nice race is worth many gallops at home; and that Mr Moore adopted a thoroughly sound policy in this case—when does he make a mistake?—is sufficiently proved by the result.

"Why Not" was as fit as a fiddle that day, or the tune would have been different. If we can only nod approvingly when the band begins to play!

It is not necessary for me to give a minute description of that exceptionally severe struggle for the cross-country blue riband. Dry details will be found in the usual chronicles of authority. Suffice it to say that it was the hardest race I ever rode in my life. Three-quarters of a mile from home my chance did not seem to be rosy; ideas touching the possibility of defeat flashed through my mind. I had then to begin "punching" my horse, though I had not been riding him with the whip—that was left for a more desperate crisis still to come. There were two runners in front of me, namely, "Lady Helen," ridden by "Terry" Kavanagh (who won the "National" on "Manifesto"), and "Wild Man from Borneo," with Mr "Joe" Widger in the saddle. Was it possible for me to get up in time to put paid to their respective accounts? We kept pegging away (that object in view) with indomitable pluck; and, answering gamely to my calls, "Why Not" ran on as surely few horses have ever done before, or—dare I say?—ever will again. There was still a chance.

At the last jump the two leaders ran a trifle wide, so that I was able to go up on the inside, and a fierce tussle ensued on the flat. Going in as straight as a gun barrel, showing the courage and tenacity of a bulldog, "Why Not" gradually wore his opponents down, and won by about three-parts of a length! The applause was gratifying. Neither of us "blew" much, considering what we had just done, when we returned to weigh in, and I pass over the many complimentary allusions. They were sufficiently numerous to have pleased a girl in love not for the first time or two. My acknowledgments were, I am afraid, inadequate, since eloquence has never been my strong suit, least of all after riding the winner of the Grand National; and I like to weigh in all right before people begin to throw bouquets at me. A few notes inside—not *billets doux*—are sweet enough. Their counterfeit presentments only are vile.

"Why Not" was one of the gamest and most generous horses I have ever ridden. He was a perfect glutton for work, a distance of ground had no terrors for him, and, though I did not punish him at all severely—for that has never been a habit of mine, "butchery" being barred in this connection—he had to be ridden out to

the last ounce. Nothing less could have done the trick. The papers contained eulogiums of our "magnificent performance." I do not know which was the more highly praised, horse or jockey, but I do know which deserved that praise —the horse. He was an absolute terrier (or warrior) in the pit on that memorable occasion. I was simply seconding his efforts to the best of my ability. And if my fatal modesty stands in my way again, as usual, I hope that kind readers will bear in mind the fact that I am not accustomed to pose as an author, or to advertise myself accordingly. With a whip in my hand I feel more at home than with a pen, and my flourishes with either weapon are not likely to bring down the house unless its foundations are rotten.

Many stories were current after "Why Not's" success. Too effusive admirers affirmed that I could have won on either of the first three. I was very glad to win on the first one. It would be foolish on my part to suggest that I could have done better than the two skilful jockeys who were second and third: they did their best, and man—even the finest horseman—can do no more. But it was not to be their day for covering themselves with glory. Providence was looking after

a youthful sprite from Epsom who threw no chance away. He, too, has had his ups and downs—especially his "downers"—so that he is not indisposed to bear witness in his neighbour's favour when his neighbour gets into a bit of a tangle again, perhaps in connection with the rates.

Another legend was to the effect that, directly after I had won on "Why Not" as narrated, I was paid a fabulous sum of money. I wish the statement had been true. Fabulous sums of money have not fallen to my share, and my earnings on the race under notice would not have made a millionaire's mouth water, unpleasant as that spectacle might be.

I am not sure whether the names of "Ilex," "Why Not," and "Grudon" will be found engraven on my heart at the last, for such poetical imagery does not appeal forcibly to my sporting taste, but thus much is certain: I shall always have a warm corner in my heart for "Why Not." He was such a game old chap. He stood all my "punching" like a hero, he struggled to the bitter end with unflinching resolution, not a grunt was emitted, and he did more than achieve success—he deserved it all.

XI

HUNTING ENJOYMENT

XI.—HUNTING ENJOYMENT

One of the greatest pleasures of my life has been found in the hunting-field, and I began to enjoy that sport at an early age. When my brother William and I were at school at Leatherhead our father used to send us a couple of ponies from Epsom about once a week, so that we might have a day with the foxhounds; and I need scarcely say that those were absolutely red-letter days in our calendar. What we could not jump in the excitement of the chase we squeezed through somehow; not infrequently we tumbled over; the idea of stopping was repulsive. It was an enchanting exercise. Of course, as everybody knows, Surrey is not the Shires, but for a small boy on a pony that can go a bit hunting anywhere, with hounds in view and a fox in front, is an inexpressible felicity. To be in at the death, too, after riding hard from start to finish as if it were a sprint race downhill with a prize for every runner!—what can exceed that happiness? For,

as hinted, a small boy on a pony (probably done to a turn) it is the bliss supreme.

I also used to go at a later period with the Epsom Draghounds, now defunct. That used to be great fun; we were always sure of a good gallop and plenty of "lepping." The line of country was selected with care so as to bring in as many "raspers" as possible, the pace was pretty hot, and "grief" was abundant. Many of the local jockeys and trainers were regular followers of that merry little pack. Amongst those who went consistently well were the late John Jones, who was a first-rate man to hounds; Robert I'Anson, who may be seen riding a hack every morning on Epsom Downs with the enthusiasm of a neophyte; Jem Adams, who still takes a hand occasionally in "schooling" gallops over hurdles; and members of my own family. Our heart was in the game; it was, therefore, usually played with zest and animation. "Skirting" tactics were forbidden. A man who did not ride straight was soon out of it, and what he saw of hounds after the first five minutes would not have enabled him to construct a fairy story as to his feats of daring in the field for the delectation of his wife before she began to shudder. Many of us go wonderfully well in a chair

(not in the saddle) with our feet under the mahogany.

As to the doings of our Epsom Draghounds, amusing stories were often told by neighbours who had begun to see the red light. It was said that we met at a public-house, checked at a public-house, and finished at a similar establishment, remaining there until the spirit of our conviviality and good-fellowship was satiated. Base calumnies, having no foundation in fact, were thus circulated.

True, after the day's brilliant sport, we stopped sometimes at an inviting hostelry on our way home at night, for tired horses require a little gruel—they had probably had a "gruelling"—and weary men have a mouth which at such an hour speaks with no uncertain sound. Beyond that, nothing, upon my word. An excess of conviviality was not considered *de rigueur*. You may take a horse to the water with a halter round his neck, but you can't make him drink unless he wants to; and you might have taken a brave Epsom drag hunter to the nearest auberge and commanded him to wet his whistle with impunity —I do not say that it would not have cost you something. We cannot move in these higher walks of life without being a bit of a pedestrian.

When sportsmen of a genial type foregather, they do not care to pull a long face; but after the gratification of a legitimate thirst, they cherish no further aspirations in that direction, least of all when they have just enjoyed a good gallop over a beautiful natural country. Were they chaste as snow, pure as ice, sober as a judge, somebody would have a "rap" at them without a doubt.

Falling over a flight of high black timber in the Tadworth district when the drag was in full cry, I shattered a new hat (my head was in it), and also fell on a nose which has been regarded by connoisseurs as my distinctive feature. The Master — good old Phil! — exhorted me to be more careful. "A new hat," he said, "yes, you may easily buy one, but a new nose like that"— he waved his arms frantically—"why, they're not kept in stock." My response was inadequate and belated. One does not care to have a pet protuberance treated with contumely: it spoils one's quickness of rude repartee.

After all, however, the full delights of hunting were not enjoyed by me till "Ilex" broke down in the "National," and I used him as a hunter. We got his legs sound enough to stand in that capacity, though it was impossible to

train him for racing; and he was indubitably one of the finest hunters that even a hardened "thruster" (which I am not) could desire. Nothing came amiss to him. No day was too long for him; no fence too big; no pace too hot. He was relatively as good over natural obstacles when hounds were running as over the regulation course for a purse of gold. You could not put him out of his place whilst he had any sort of a leg to stand at ease on. He never gave me a fall, either 'chasing or hunting. One hated to get off his back at any time of the day or night.

I often had a great deal of fun with the Surrey Staghounds on "Ilex," especially in respect to those gallant followers who knew me and did not know him. During the course of one excellent run, when we were going strong and well, a youth by my side on a common-bred steed smiled at me superciliously, and said: "What is that poor old crock you're riding? Strange to say," he went on, vastly pleased with himself, "I've never yet seen a steeplechase jockey on a good hunter." He chuckled fatuously, as though he had just swallowed a speedy ball and wanted it.

Afterwards, when he saw "Ilex" trot quietly

up to post and rails, and pop over like a bird, thence galloping along with his head in his chest during the run, as if the whole business were child's play to him—which it probably was —that oracle changed his tune. He wished to know whether "Ilex" was for sale. "Money," I answered, "wouldn't buy him, so you may guess what a patent safety treasure this is. Why, in Epsom," I went on, warming to my work, "little boys play truant to see him jump, and when they are birched for doing so, they say the pleasure was worth the pain." Good judges, too, or my education has been neglected.

Whilst dealing with this branch of the subject, I may reproduce the following anecdote written in our honour by a man whose judgment of hunters is authoritative, and who wrote the paragraph during moments of inspiration—all too few in his career. So the story goes:

"Some time after running third in the Grand National, 'Ilex' suffered from a 'leg,' and could not be trained. Then Arthur Nightingall used him as a hack and hunter; and it was also very funny to watch the circus tricks played by him and the old horse of a morning on Epsom Downs. Arthur would stand up in the saddle, pretending that he was doing the great hoop and similar acts through a ball of fire; while, to con-

clude the performance, he would slip off gracefully down the horse's tail. Despite his 'dicky' legs, 'Ilex' made a splendid hunter, and his jockey used to go very well on him with the Surrey Staghounds. As to that, a good story is told in Epsom and the surrounding parishes; how much of it is believed does not affect its humour. On a day there was a brilliant run with those hounds in the Chessington country, then fairly good, and foremost among the leading division was Arthur Nightingall on his 'National' champion, going great guns, or h—ll for leather, as the experts say; he looked like catching anything (particularly a fox) in a single-handed encounter. A rather swell gentleman was following him on a first-class hunter, jumping what Arthur negotiated and so on, fancying himself not a little, and seemingly intent on cutting-down tactics, until a high hedge with a stiff rail in it was reached. 'Ilex' did it all right, of course, with a nice margin for contingencies; but the swell on his beautiful hunter 'took a toss.' When he got up — a fearsome object covered with ooze—a friend said to him cheerfully: 'Well, and do you know what you have been trying to beat?' 'N-no,' muttered the valiant one, now shivering. 'You have been trying,' said the other, 'to beat the winner of the Grand National and the finest cross-country jockey in the world.' 'Gracious heavens!' groaned the swell personage, 'I ought to have my head stuffed full of shavings ready for Guy Fawkes' night. Trying to beat "Ilex," eh?

Why, in future I *must* be condemned to gallop after old women down a lane.'"

(*Note by eminent author.*—"This story is as true as many that find their way into print—that is, if it were much truer nobody would believe it. Many Nimrods who attempted to follow 'Ilex' in the hunting-field had a sort of bad headache ere they had gone far. Some came a 'cropper,' and had nothing to boast of even in their post-prandial slumbers.")

Few thoroughbred horses, after being raced, make really good hunters. They are apt to rush a little too fast at their fences, are hot and excitable; but "Ilex" behaved himself with perfect composure and *savoir faire* under his new circumstances. He wanted riding. His temper was easily upset if he were messed about at all; good "hands" were essential. Few gentlemen would have enjoyed themselves on "Ilex" in the hunting-field, and I was obliged to tell a friend who desired a mount on him that it would not be prudent on his part to take the risk. "You couldn't ride one side of him"—such was my genial affirmation—"and the other side would give you more trouble than you are worth." His cross-buttock was not unmeritorious, but there was nothing in it to leave a sting in my

mind or elsewhere. Such poison is not difficult to remove from one's system.

I often regretted that the leisure at my disposal did not permit me to take "Ilex" into Leicestershire for the hunting, since I am sure that he would have astonished some of the most audacious "bruisers" in that paradisaical region. His speed and my light weight were important factors in our favour. Besides, amongst the fox-catchers, we do not often see a Grand National winner; he is a bit of a curiosity on account of his triumphs in another arena. The glamour of success, like the gilt on the gingerbread, is not soon worn off unless one is too greedy for promotion.

The statement has been advanced that steeplechase jockeys are not, as a rule, hard men to hounds. "They like," said a cynic, "to see a gold watch and chain on the other side of a fence before they care to jump it, and if there is also a little coin concealed in the hedge, they don't need to send for ferrets, their own power of sniff being supreme." I have watched many steeplechase jockeys going really well when hounds were running, and—if I may say so without undue egotism—I was generally in the first flight or thereabouts with "Ilex" as my mount.

It would have been a shame to be anywhere else in his society. He spoilt me for riding other hunters. The common-bred ones did not suit me after my experiences with him; he had taught me to appreciate the highest phases of this sport. What a great horse, to be sure!

XII

RIDING ORDERS

XII.—RIDING ORDERS

A SMALL jockey had just lost a race which he ought to have won, so the story goes, and he was blamed by his employer, the trainer, for not obeying orders. "How could I?" cried the boy, in an agony of apprehension. "This was only a mile race, and you gave me orders enough for 20 miles." That superfluity of instruction is not often indulged in at the present time; modern methods are wiser.

Trainers have not been in the habit of overburdening me so far as the riding orders are concerned. The formula was usually something like this before putting me up on a horse that I did not know: "I can only tell you one thing, Arthur"—the trainer speaking—"he gets the distance"—2 miles or 3 miles, as the case might be—so then I knew I had to lay well up and see that it was a nicely run race. On the other hand, if speed were the animal's strong point, I should be told to wait and come with a

final run so as to paralyse the opposition in the nick of time.

I do not believe, however, in giving a good jockey too many orders, because in a jumping race you have to go where you find yourself at the fences, and it is not possible always to have things adjusted exactly to suit you. Being told to wait, one may just as well do so in front as behind, if it is a slow-run race. A clever jockey uses his own discretion as to what sort of a battle is being waged, and he acts accordingly. Hampering him with a mass of instructions is not likely to contribute to his success. He cannot know what is best to be done till the crisis arrives.

At a race meeting in the Midlands, I remember, an old-fashioned trainer gave me a most elaborate code of rules showing me how to ride a mare of his in a hurdle handicap. He said that I must wait with her till after clearing the final obstacle, and then do the trick in style by a flash of speed on the flat. That programme, as arranged, was carried out by me in its exactitude, save for a trifling detail—the flash of speed anticipated was not good enough in the last few strides. I was second. On the following day, at the same meeting, this mare was in a race of a similar

character. I steered her again, and the owner said: "Ride her how you like, and see if you can do any better without my ridiculous interference." Making more use of her the second time, I was able to win pretty comfortably; whereupon that old-fashioned and noble-minded trainer was profuse in his acknowledgments. "You know more than I do," he cried, "and if you didn't, you would have to employ a maiden aunt to keep your head straight."

At one time I rode frequently for Mr W. H. and Mr "Garry" Moore, who are both thoroughly practical and experienced in respect to every point of the game. Their riding orders were always brief and lucid; there was no excess of verbiage. Indeed, Mr Willy Moore, before he put me in the saddle to win the "National" on "Why Not," said: "You know as much about the old horse as I do, Arthur, so you know what to do." I did it — a blessed consummation. "Why Not" was always in the first six or seven, though it was very hard work to get him home with flying colours.

"When he is stone-cold don't ride for a fall" —that was generally the advice given to me by the brothers Moore before I rode out of the paddock on one of their candidates. The con-

sideration evinced for one's feelings was pleasant enough. At the perilous period named, when a horse is stone-cold, one may so easily ask for what one does not wish to receive and what is of no service to us when delivered. Consignments of trouble are best left to those who have a genius for wriggling out of it at the last moment.

A curious incident occurred at Manchester which bears humorously upon this question of riding orders. My mount in a hurdle race there was "Cynosurus," fully "expected"; but I was beaten by a gentleman rider on a 100 to 8 chance, and he gave me an amusing account of the performance. He has a vivid imagination, so we may take a little off, perhaps, for persiflage.

"My trainer," he said, "did not come to see his mare run, but he sent me a four-page letter containing minute instructions how I was to ride her. I tried to learn them by heart; they were too intricate and elaborate. I was supposed to do something special and clever, if not supernatural, at every corner; and if the code had been stretched as long as the course, it could not have been more convincing. Yet, after all, I was not so far out of my reckoning, or I could not have put paid to your account with such an air of—ah—distinction."

He also added that he did not object to waiting for the hurdles to be knocked down when his "flyer" was too flippant to take care of himself, and jumped as if his wings had been awkwardly greased for the job. Still, it is not very agreeable to have to do something "extra" at each corner.

The riding orders usually given by an elderly North-country trainer took this form: "Do not be afraid of winning too far." A close finish caused him immense excitement. When he had more than five pounds on his candidate—a considerable wager for him unless he were "a bit above himself," as the saying is—he did not like to see all that money trembling in the balance.

"Arthur," he told me once, "get home as soon as you can, my lad, and don't draw it fine unless you desire to find me blubbering, when you come back, near the blessed buffet."

He was a most astute man, and encouraged me to use my own judgment as the race was run. Lying too far out of one's ground incited him to a fine flow of objurgation. He loved to see a gallop, not a crawl. "Be within effective striking distance," he admonished me, "when you arrange to let your blow fall, or you might as well be beating the air as your horse." Many of his sporting aphorisms have now an air of antiquity.

Then, from a jockey's point of view, there are other grievances connected with this matter deserving of attention. They are apt to worry him a trifle at certain crises of his fate. Having received his orders, for instance, and carried them out to the best of his ability, maybe without success, he is liable to run up against the Irresponsible Critic. This oracle does not mince his words, even if he makes a hash of things.

We may hear him proclaim in the paddock after a close finish that one of the jockeys taking part in it certainly threw the race away, and that he ought to do his riding for the future in a barge with a net over him to keep him in. Many of these critics have never been on a horse. They speak sarcastically with reference to a subject of which they are absolutely ignorant, with the result that their fulminations are absurd. A connoisseur of this stamp expressed to me his conviction that a well-known cross-country jockey had "pulled his horse down" at the ditch fence, and I was expected to receive the statement with equanimity. The idea of jockeys "pulling horses down" in the manner alleged tickled my fancy. A critic of jockeyship who has never been on a horse's back is assuredly at a dis-

advantage. He might as wisely tell us how to fly without the necessary apparatus.

Not long ago I was interested in a race at Hurst Park, when a gentleman rider's orders were quaint. His idea at first was to commit them to memory ere it became too late for him to carry them into effect.

"My horse," he informed me with flashing eyes, "is a fearful 'welsher,' so that his estimable trainer has blinkered him, stuffed his ears full of cotton-wool, and made him about half-drunk. He can barely see, he can't hear; I hope that he won't stagger about or squeal, and, what is more, they have deprived me of my whip and spurs. The place is marked for me on the course where I am to make my final desperate effort. Do you think" — he smiled sweetly — "this is a sort of cake-walk or beanfeast for me?"

Whilst, naturally, I was unable to satisfy his legitimate curiosity concerning the point at issue, I watched the race with a great deal of interest. Never were riding orders more faithfully executed. He came to the front at the exact spot prescribed, nay, marked out for his guidance, and, riding vigorously thence with his hands — the horse took a lot of keeping straight — he

won cleverly by half a length. It was a notable achievement.

"My joker," he explained again (the subject fascinated him) after weighing in, "my joker was half-drunk, blind, deaf, and of an evil temper. He has had some of the professionals over the rails. If I had hit him he would have made a bee-line for the nearest precipice or cemetery. Don't you think I'm lucky, not only to have won, but also to be alive at this emergency?" Felicitations followed; something had been done to earn them.

At Aintree a few years ago, when my brother William rode Captain Machell's "Emperor" in the Grand National, an interesting divergence from the riding orders was observed. "Emperor" fell, and in order to come back to the paddock by a short cut, William remounted and rode him at the racecourse rails. The horse "kneed" them, and, again falling, broke his back. In a short time he was not left with a hair on mane or tail: the public had virtually stripped him. The same thing happened to "Holocauste" when he fell in the Derby at Tattenham Corner. Relics of him were sold in Epsom town at night. The demand was so brisk that "fakes" had to be perpetrated so as

to keep people in good humour. I do not know whether anybody was much the wiser or much the worse.

Summing up the situation with an impartial mind and as succinctly as possible, I can only express my belief as to riding orders that a good jockey should be allowed to use his own discretion as far as practicable, especially when he knows his mount. Hard-and-fast rules are difficult to carry out in this association. It is foolish, as hinted, to give 20-mile orders for a 1-mile race. Besides, I heard a small jockey confess that if he had not luckily forgotten all the trainer's instructions for his guidance, he could not have hit the bull's-eye. "The old man," he said, "has a 5-furlong tongue, and when he fairly slips himself nobody can remember what the voice meant." When we forget what the voices meant, we have often as good as backed a winner.

XIII

A FEW FALLS

XIII.—A FEW FALLS

Perhaps I have been more fortunate than many steeplechase jockeys in respect to falls, but I have certainly had my share, and some of them were very severe. Whilst I have broken both collar-bones several times, put my shoulders out, had my ribs injured, and my head knocked about as though there were nothing in it worth preservation, I have never broken my arms or legs or neck, and I suppose that for such relief I must be thankful.

Periods of insensibility after a wicked "crumpler" have been frequently my portion. I have been shaken almost to death more than once. And some people say that we are well paid! What ordinary man would care to take such risks as those indicated, even if he were told to name his own terms, and to come for the money with a bag? It was no doubt with such facts in mind that a resident at Newmarket asked a friend whether he did not think that an

eminent steeplechase jockey, whom they both knew, was a bit of a fool. The response was crisp, not to say inhuman.

"Why, of course, he is no end of a fool," said the friend, "or he would not be a steeplechase jockey." That is what we get for providing the British public with sport of a brisk and exciting character, on which they can bet till the bookmakers seek safety in flight.

My first experience of riding serious jumping after I left school was disastrous. I was teaching the young idea how to "lep" in the paddock at home over small fences, when my father, who was standing by, cracked his whip, the result being that my horse took off about three lengths from the fence and dropped on it, also on me. I was insensible for some time, and had my ribs bent on the right side. My reflections on coming to were not hilarious. It was a bad start. To be knocked out at the first time of asking, to be so terribly maltreated during the first lesson—well, it was rather a disillusion for an ambitious novice.

But I was soon up and about again, keen as ever to take my turn in the "schooling" revelries; and, for a mercy, in youth one quickly forgets the last fall in anticipation of another.

"Lumps and bumps, Epsom," was my notorious telegraphic address.

I took another pretty "toss" with "Prince Frederick" at Manchester. Two horses fell in front of us on the flat whilst going round the bottom turn; I tumbled over both of them and was again — it is an old story — pounded into extreme insensibility. Carried into the ambulance room for the sake of peace and quietness, I gradually resumed consciousness. Seeing Mr W. H. Moore enter, for I had been engaged by him to ride in the last two races, I said to him: "Where are the colours? I'm all right now to ride in the last two races."

He smiled sympathetically. "The last two races have been run some time ago," Mr Moore answered; "and if you are able to ride in the next two, wonders will never cease."

As a matter of fact, I went on to Tarporley the following day to ride for Lord Rendlesham in the big steeplechase there, and I must have been obviously in such a dazed condition that I was not permitted to ride. My disgust was perfect, if not perfectly expressed. Yet, truth to tell, I can scarcely recollect walking round that famous Tarporley course. Friends assured me that I had done so with a fair assumption of

sanity; but friends will say anything in that way when their own material interests are not threatened. Ask them to put a penny in the slot, so to speak, and you may hear from them different views of mankind.

One of my most brilliant adventures in the acrobatic line occurred whilst racing on the flat at Sandown Park. I was riding a horse of Mr C. Hibbert's, and we were knocked into the hurdles going round the bottom turn. We came a fearful "cropper"; I was once more reduced to a state of unconsciousness, my head was cut about badly, one of my shoulders was injured, and I was bruised comprehensively. Ten or twelve horses galloped over me. At that period a stout man used to bring the ambulance for us when our hurts were more than commonly pernicious, and kind-hearted spectators urged him to move more quickly to my rescue. "I know who it is down," he replied, "and pray don't attempt to teach me my business. I have taken the ambulance many times for Arthur Nightingall, and the obstinate ass will never get into it." He seemed to imagine that I had offered him a personal insult by summoning him to the scene of carnage, and then refusing to accept his ministrations.

Another rather sensational fall happened me at Sandown, when Mr T. Sherwood's "Pigeon Pie" came to grief at the second hurdle, and lay across me, gradually squeezing the breath out of my body. Two men standing there allowed him almost to accomplish his fell purpose ere they came to my assistance and pulled him off my unfortunate person. It was veritably a tight squeeze. Yet, heedless of my wounds, I rode in a $3\frac{1}{2}$ mile hurdle race the same afternoon. My mount was Lord Lovat's "Query," trained by me, but my ankle was so badly sprained that I was obliged to pull up before the finish, the pain being intolerable. Whereupon a genial trainer informed me that I was actually attempting the impossible, and that if I succeeded my wages would not be increased. "They never are," he said, "when you have done something dreadful for them."

In a "schooling" gallop at Burgh Heath, when I was training there, I had a nasty fall, and put my shoulder out. I did not know it was out, my orders being to use plenty of hot fomentations and so forth. After about a fortnight of that course of treatment—I was trying to ride as well as I could in the painful conditions—a London specialist was consulted, and he said at

once, "Why, your shoulder is out." The putting it in was almost the worst of a bad job. Beads of perspiration appeared on my intellectual brow; the eminent author was having a cruel time. The necessary work done, that heartless specialist said, with a grin: "And now let me look at your other shoulder, for I am sure there is something radically wrong with that, too." But, having endured enough agony for one day, I promised to come again when the weather was brighter. It never cleared sufficiently for that purpose.

The worst falls we get in my opinion are those which involve being knocked insensible, as I have often been, since the ill effects are not easily remedied. What helps to save us is our hard condition and the optimism of youth. One of the shattering tumbles taken by us as a part of the day's programme might kill an ordinary plump citizen with as much blubber as self-esteem. After being knocked out absolutely I have often come to in time to ride in the next race; and I have seen many of my brother jockeys display a similar spirit of enterprise. One is obliged to admire their pluck if doubting their discretion. Gold cannot repay them for a mangled existence. I know a cross-country jockey now whose head is of very little service

to him on account of the repeated taps it has received from the hoofs of falling horses, and if he had made a large fortune he would have deserved every penny. "I am silly," he says; and he is right. He is compelled to live on a meagre pittance. If he had not one or two good friends he might be forced to shut up shop, as it were, from lack of patronage — I mean sustenance.

Having regard, therefore, to our inevitable risks, to the severe injuries we often endure, and to the fact that we may be killed any day when we go on the course to ride a "rocky" jumper over the big regulation ditches, I am surely justified in saying that in this case the labourer is worthy of his hire. He may not live long to enjoy the proceeds. The next imperial "purler" may put him out of action. As a fine horseman of this type said to me before the races—we were to ride over fences in the mud and mist at Manchester—"I don't know when I'm going to be killed, of course, but I often feel like death with a horse on top of me in the ditch, and nobody comes too soon to assist in my—ah—resurrection." Festive moments are often cultivated in such lives so as to dispel grim thoughts of the dangers ahead. A short career is not

necessarily a merry one, but the party owning it is foolish if he fails to have a bit of a flutter while the light lasts. It is sure to go out in a feeble splutter.

Poor Charlie Hogan, when he was riding over a country, used to get some nasty falls; he did not pick his mounts. Once, after "coming it" beautifully at Manchester, he explained to me the curious advantages of his position. "Sure and bedad," he ran on, "I'd rather fall here than swing round at such a meeting as ——. For here" — his eyes sparkled — "I'm no sooner down than there are men with flasks at my mouth, but, sure now, at —— you are left to lie where you fell and lick the dew off the grass." Hogan possessed a considerable share of humour, and another of his pronouncements was this, delivered very racily: "When Charlie Hogan, that broth of a boy, is afraid to ride anything on four legs, or on three legs and a 'swinger,' Charlie Hogan will send for his mother to come and hold his hands up while he weeps through his fingers." He meant what he said, every word of it, though all his words were not exactly true. Some were spoken in jest—not the finest test of accuracy or sincerity.

"We get nothing extra," an old steeplechase

jockey reminded me, "for time spent on our back in the ambulance." That gives us a key to the situation. We have to work hard and do desperate things occasionally for our wages, and if we happen to be knocked out, our wages are not appreciably augmented; they are conceivably stopped. They may, at any rate, look rather small after we have been on our back in bed for a month or so with a series of dislocations. One grows so tired of the wretched ambulance when its use has become familiar. Sleep there is not refreshing, the attitude is not elegant, and my own exits have been gladly performed.

XIV

BACKING HORSES

XIV.—BACKING HORSES

When innocent neighbours ask for my advice anent betting, I venture to say, "Better not." The profits cannot be depended on with certainty, losses are inevitable, and money in pocket — it is an old story — is never out of place. During the whole course of my riding adventures I have given little serious attention to the subject suggested by our heading. Jockeys are not supposed to back horses, of course, being content to ride them—a far more paying game; and, speaking for the majority of cross-country *confrères* whom I have known more or less intimately, I am able to bear testimony to the fact that they have certainly not striven to cut a brilliant figure in Tattersall's enclosure. Their ambitions have been more modest, more thoroughly in harmony with their position. As one of those gallant cavaliers remarked, with his hat on one side: "We cannot expect to shine in two places at

once; and when I am doing well in the saddle, I don't want to 'crab' it in the ring." One's scintillations there often end, alas! in smoke, not in sparkles.

It may be said in a general way, and not metaphorically, that wages rather than wagers have chiefly absorbed my energies in a racing sense, and that so long as I have had plenty of horses to ride I have not yearned to back them. The man who hopes to kill two birds with one stone usually misses his mark altogether, and has not a feather to fly with, as may be said, when his sweetheart comes to see him on a holiday job. Assuredly, a jockey is likely to be more affluent towards the end of his bright sporting career — I am assuming that his intelligence has not been perverted by too much success—if he avoids the fascinating form of speculation under notice. He may even ride with more dash and determination and confidence; he may not be quite so anxious to get home before his time, as the saying is, when his own money is not at stake; he is cool, resourceful, master of his elevated situation. He does not see his hardly-earned sovereigns left in the "ditch." Nor is he foolish enough to contribute appreciably to the coffers of the

bookmakers, whom we may "nod" at with respect. His attention is not distracted by external or sordid considerations touching, as it were, the root of all evil: hence that popular expression, "grovelling amongst the roots." He is satisfied with his legitimate emoluments. What a nice "long stocking" he will surely acquire in time if he does not break a leg or two!

Yet, truly, there is another aspect of the case to be studied. A jockey who is training and riding is entitled to have a bet on his own horses. When I had over thirty jumpers in my stable, and one of them was found to have a delectable chance for a race, I was not afraid to support him in a modest way; and, naturally, this confession is wrung from me as painlessly as if it were not a tooth that had seen its best day. Other trainers will tell you the same. They are not likely to grow very fat internally — I mean as to their pocket — unless they can back a winner or two of their own occasionally. Not for them, as a rule, are the "presents" bestowed on a jockey after his brilliant series of triumphs. My father used to make that point clear to us.

"Here am I," he would say, "with all the

trouble and worry of getting the horses perfectly fit to run, then you ride them to victory, are handsomely rewarded, and I have what I can get. If I did not help myself with settling day in view, I might not be able to—er—settle." He had many choice sayings, marked by sound moral philosophy. It was a treat to listen to him when he was running into form. Self-help was one of his most manly attributes after the numbers went up for the next race. We do well to remember that part of the text.

The fact is, moreover, that unless a trainer can have a bet sometimes on something of his own worth backing, he does not promise to grow rich beyond the dreams of avarice. He may experience a difficulty in facing the music when his creditors call the tune. Granting that he has a large number of horses in his stable, the ordinary profits automatically accruing are satisfactory, adequate. There are, for instance, some trainers who receive as much as three pounds a horse per week, and there are little men who are obliged to accept a much smaller sum—perhaps thirty shillings a week per horse, as alleged in certain cases — which renders it difficult for them to make both ends meet. If

the two ends can be only partially brought together it is not so bad. A successful wager is often nothing short of a providential benefaction in the trying circumstances sketched.

"It seems to me," groaned a trainer, not going too well, "that I can do no good unless I bet; and, after betting, I feel that I am going to the bad at the rate of too many knots an hour." The sensation is not agreeable whilst it lasts, but, mercifully, it does not last long. Punters are often "broke" so quickly that they scarcely realise what has happened until it is too late to turn over a new leaf with a gasp of despair. The old leaves withered ere the season approached its doom.

A trainer is, as hinted, often forgotten in the distribution of cakes and ale after one of his horses has won a nice race. For example, when I was training for Mr Goodson, I ran his "Dancing Laddie" at Epsom, and he asked me whether I proposed to ride "Dancing Laddie" myself. I said: "No; if you are going to bet, I shall get the best jockey I can find." The race was, of course, on the flat; I engaged the late John Watts for our candidate, and he won comfortably. Then Mr Goodson handed me either twenty-five pounds or fifty pounds—I forget which—to give

to Watts, whereupon I made bold enough to say in a jocular spirit: "And where do I come in?"

Mr Goodson's response was crisp, terse, unmistakable. "Why," he said, "you come in with the training bill, and go out with a fat cheque." Whilst, indisputably, it is pleasant enough to go out with a few fat cheques on our person — fancy staggering about beneath the weight of them as though one's actual existence were trembling in the balance!—some trainers aver that they cannot do well out of the fees alone. There must be other accretions.

The metallicians—heaven preserve them for our good!—are looked upon for a provision of the nice red gold. Sometimes they fail us in the hour of need; a really "good thing" is upset, perhaps, at the ditch; conceivably there is a bit of a tangle on our part whilst their withers are unwrung, for it is hard to beat them when first and second favourites go down in a flutter; and, alas! the worst feature of the scheme is that we do not usually get over the odds. One is dealing with men who fix their own prices. With a similar privilege, many shopkeepers would soon be able to add fresh developments to their store.

Speaking generally, indeed, steeplechase jockeys do not bet; they cannot afford to lose the money.

They realise the difficulties of the situation. For instance, if they had their riding fee of five pounds on a horse and he lost, they would be virtually "chancing" their neck for nothing; and a man foolish enough to do that does not deserve to have a neck round which (if he is lucky) two fair arms may be clasped at any time, especially if he has been riding winners and has not expended the cash in other directions. Those fair arms are not exploited (in the old sweet way) for nothing. How much they cost, perhaps, depends on how much we have and the intensity of our devotion. But I don't know if it is not worse than backing horses.

Amusing stories are told in this connection. A local tout once had the audacity to inform me that all the runners are not necessarily "out" on every occasion. He suspected mysteries. "All that will be altered," he said, "when my new Græco-Roman rules come into force for the suppression of tip, cat, and run—I mean in-and-out running. Why, then, even *we*"—he squinted at me luminously—"may blunder on to a winner sometimes if we are exceptionally robust." He shook his pencil despondently, however, as if to indicate that was the source of mischief. His *aplomb* is infinitesimal even when he is leaning

against the mile-post with his beacon-course or hang-dog expression. I could not give him a walk-over, not after his jumping me off like that: it would have been unnatural.

"Worse men than *us*," so I cantered on—"I mean worse than you—have been known to win a little money at the races. But, of course"—this was my next terrible admission—"trainers do not find more first-past-the-post heroes than they can do with for themselves, so that the prospects of a rank outsider may be readily estimated."

He took heart of grace in view of my official recognition of him as a potential factor of ruin. "I loathe the notion," he declaimed, "of backing horses which are puffed up by asses, if not ridden by them"—he glanced at me out of the corner of his eye as if he were scoring off me with deadly effect—"and relying on my own sound, practical judgment"—he coughed in an embarrassed way, as well he might—"I do not back winners enough to keep a female in necessary—er—disinfectants." . . . It seemed that he had been recently crossed in love, twice, which accounted for his acrid criticism of divinities.

Expert knowledge and information are a great help in this department, but they do not infallibly yield a dividend at the end of the week. Regular

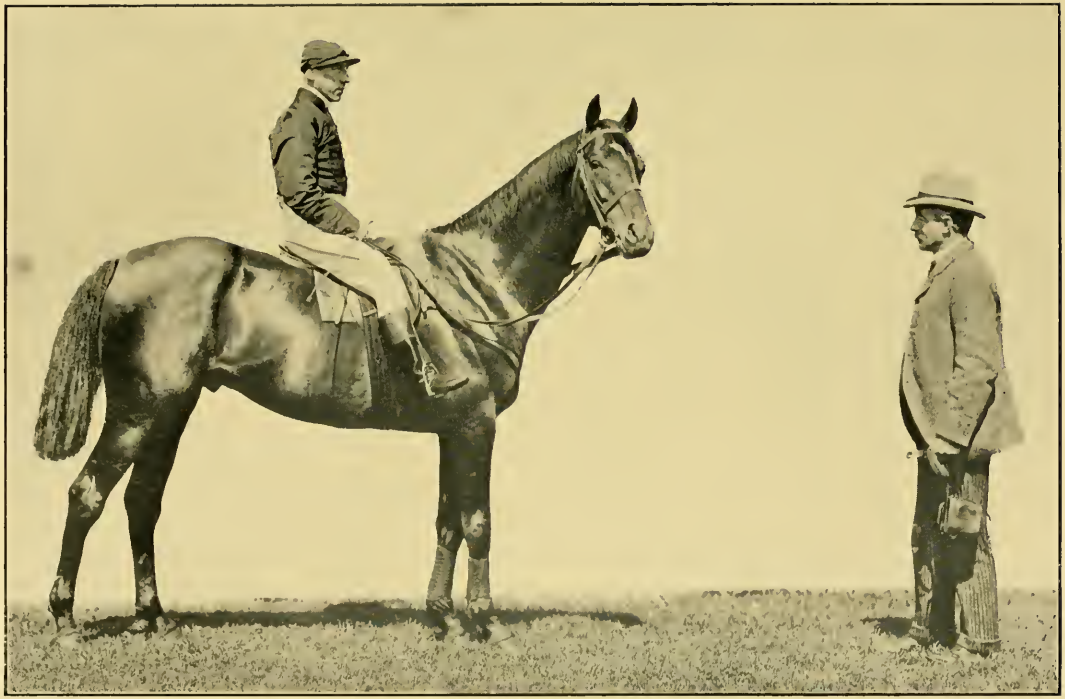
wages on Saturday night are infinitely more satisfactory. We can learn little or nothing about race-horses by simply watching them as they walk in listless fashion round a paddock. We may gaze at them for years, if we have a sort of season ticket for that period, and remain as ignorant (when the ticket is run out) as we were when we began the absurd inquisition.

Referring to such people, a compatriot said: "They might as well attempt to describe houses without an elementary knowledge of architecture. They could do so, of course, as many do in various ways, and their excursus would not be of the slightest use to a jerry-builder. Horses written about by asses!—what are the cash receipts likely to be?"

It was not for me to say. I have now relieved the burden from my own chest, and cannot interfere with other folks' bronchial troubles. Yet, veritably, when my virtuous neighbours, fair and otherwise—that is, fairish—now ask for my advice about betting, my answer still is: "Better not." If they are very fair I whisper it into their ear, and no doubt it goes out on the other side.

XV

"GRUDON"



GRUDON. (Author up, and Mr. Bletsoe, Owner.)

XV.—"GRUDON"

I SHALL certainly never forget whilst Memory holds her sway that wonderful race for the Grand National which I won on "Grudon" in 1901. Nothing like it had ever been seen. One of its extraordinary features was that it was run in a snowstorm; all the fences were perfectly white in their covering of snow; the course was similarly decorated, and the general outlook was most unpromising. Was it possible for horses to gallop at top speed under those conditions with anything like safety over such a big country? Opinions differed as to that point, heads were shaken, and, as usual, those visitors who had not to do the riding did most of the talking: they saw no danger, having to take no risk. When men have ceased to perform in the saddle or have never appeared there—this is proverbial philosophy—no fences are too big for them, no country is too awkward, no feats impossible. It

is a sort of ringing the changes after the money is gone.

Several of the jockeys engaged to ride in the chief race that day signed a petition to have it postponed on account of the tempestuous weather, and I was one of the heroes who affixed my signature to that historical document. Our counsels of prudence were ineffective. The stewards waited for about ten minutes, and then told us we had to go. Some of the ancient hunting men, who attend in large numbers at Aintree to see the "National," were vastly delighted. It reminded them, no doubt, of their own grand old days of derring-do when they rode after fox through snow and over tremendous obstacles just as though they had a spare neck in their pocket, and were not afraid to produce it in the nick of time.

So as to clear the ground for the purpose of this thrilling chapter, I must also place the fact on record that "Grudon" is the only stallion (so far as I can make out) that has won the "Liverpool" since my father trained and owned "Shifnal," who won it in 1878, being ridden by the late John Jones, father of the King's jockey. A typical 'chaser, "Grudon" is by "Old Buck" out of "Avis"; and I believe that I am quite

correct in stating that Mr Bletsoe, who bred, owned, and trained "Grudon" in Northamptonshire, bought "Old Buck" for a few sovereigns out of a plough. Probably he had some idea at the time as regards the treasure he had picked up, for he is a fine all-round judge of horses, and this is where the romance of breeding comes in: to wit, pearls of price may be discovered in the rubbish-heap. An eye keen enough to detect them scintillates on the scene, and the rest is simple. "Old Buck," too, in a plough — the sire of a future "National" winner—presents a picture that one loves to dwell on with a certain sense of emotion. As a small owner affirmed piously: "No man need despair about the blackest outlook so long as he has a blood 'un. The latter may turn up trumps for him even when he thinks he has played his last card." Truly "a bit of blood" has helped many lame dogs over the stile. It may have also assisted to cripple others in a vital part—their pocket.

I only rode "Grudon" a few times. On the first occasion I steered him to victory in the Paddock Steeplechase at Manchester in 1900; next in a 2-mile steeplechase at Kempton, being fourth in a field of good horses. After that race Mr Bletsoe approached me with reference to my

riding his representative in the Grand National; and satisfactory terms being arranged, I agreed to do so. On the morning of the race I piloted him in a canter on the course, where he pleased all beholders, and thus the full extent of my then acquaintanceship with him is indicated. He was not an easy horse to ride, having a will of his own; yet, curiously, his owner's daughter, Miss Bletsoe, who is a most accomplished horsewoman, seemed to handle him better than anybody else. I have seen him walk for yards on his hind legs with Miss Bletsoe on his back; even so, she was a perfect mistress of the situation. She also rode him over fences with the same charming dexterity and *insouciance*. If she could have taken charge of him in the actual race there is no reason to doubt that she would have acquitted herself in an able and successful manner. And would she have signed that petition in view of the cheerless meteorological aspect? Perhaps not; ladies have no end of pluck in the saddle; still, one cannot help but feel a sentiment of pity, which is all they are likely to get, for shivering jockeys.

Seeing what the state of the going was, and grasping the situation at once, Mr Bletsoe made large purchases of butter on the spot just before

the race, and stuffed "Grudon's" feet with that substance. It effectually prevented "balling." "Grudon" never put a foot wrong, never slipped, during the whole distance, although he was galloping through snow most of the time, and the general conditions were extremely tricky. The insertion of that butter as depicted was assuredly a stroke of genius. What we should have done without it I do not know; we might easily have come to grief at an early stage of the contest, and — and — this chapter might never have been written! Hence the fact is now revealed for the first time that a little butter once saved the world from a great loss. It is at such crises of her history that Britain's real heroes are discovered. It seems no use searching for them at other times unless one has a tasting order at one's disposition.

My orders were to let "Grudon" run his own race as I found him going, and I lay well up with the leading division. I was always with the first two or three. Indeed, Archie Anthony, on "Covert Hack," and I enjoyed quite a long and animated conversation for some part of the journey; and it was with a feeling of regret that at last I was obliged to say good-bye to him about a mile from home. "Ta-ta, old chap," I

murmured consolingly, "I must now push on a trifle faster, or the cupboard will be bare when I get there, and I wouldn't disappoint old Mother Hubbard for the world."

He wished me luck, and I pushed forward accordingly, anxious (so to speak) to give the little dog a bone. In this case he was doing something to deserve it. The cry was still "for'ard on," with no chance for those who were stone-cold in the rear, and with no time to pick up the pieces. It was an old story—the fox in the next parish and hounds in the next field.

Galloping on like a lion and jumping like a stag, "Grudon" went to the front as soon as he was wanted; and he remained there. He was never at fault for a moment. The only mistake he made was about 200 yards from the winning-post, with his race well won, when he jumped a footpath across the course and gave me a bit of a shock. "To be wrecked now," I thought, "just in sight of land, with a toe almost on shore—it would be too terrible for words."

And I was glad that there were no more foot-paths to be jumped as though they were swollen torrents. Afterwards all was plain sailing. We won comfortably, as history records, and neither of us was greatly distressed. Somebody mentioned

that we could go round again if that were necessary, but I was glad to think that no such extra turn would be demanded from us. The weather was bitterly cold, and the going was not heavenly. When unsaddling the horse prior to weighing in after our victory, I put the whip between my knees as jockeys do under such felicitous circumstances, and, *hey presto*, it was gone in the twinkling of a second. Miss Bletsoe had been prompt to annex it. No one else had half a chance of getting it while she was on the course. That relic of a great sporting event is in good hands, and its historical value will be increased probably when I have won another Grand National or two. All that is wanted is a second "Ilex" or "Grudon" to do the trick with perfect distinction. The jockey is ready and waiting for his job; he trusts that in the fulness of time the essential horses will be forthcoming. What if their sires are now at the plough? It is as easy to come back from the land as to return thither with our capacity for enjoyment sadly diminished. "Somebody must be at the bottom of the class," as a bad little boy said, "and why not I? Anybody else would be ashamed."

After winning the Grand National on "Grudon," I rode him in the Great Lancashire

Steeplechase at Manchester in the same year, when, unfortunately, though I finished the course, he broke down. He was going great guns at the time, and it seemed to me that victory was fairly within my grasp. He only ran once afterwards (1902), in the Middlesex Handicap Steeplechase at Kempton, where, trying to give some good horses weight, he finished nowhere. I may also mention that prior to my success on him in the principal event at Aintree, "Grudon" had run without distinction in that race—once ridden by the Australian jockey, James Hickey, who trained "Moifaa" at Epsom to win the "National," and once by his owner's son, Mr Morgan Bletsoe. When Hickey rode him I fell at the brook on "The Soarer," as to which an amusing anecdote will be told in its proper place. How is it these good things keep surging up in one's mind when we ought to be thinking of more important subjects? If one could only muzzle one's brain as well as one's mouth, many idle words might go unspoken.

Now at the stud "Grudon" is sure to be, according to my judgment, a pronounced success. Much depends, of course, on whether he has the right sort of mares; we cannot expect to make silk purses out of sows' ears. On his own merits

I need not expatiate. He proved himself to be a really good horse in public; he could go fast and stay; he was a beautiful jumper, thoroughly game; and as regards make and shape he may be scheduled briefly as "top-hole." Anybody who saw him racing at the head of his field over the big Aintree fences during that memorable snow-storm, with his feet full of butter, is not likely to forget the exhilarating spectacle. And he *would* jump that puddle just at the last! Clearly he did not mean to throw a chance away, butter or no butter, when in sight of home, sweet home. He gave me a very charming ride, despite the arctic surroundings. Good old "Grudon"! I must say it, even though it is my last word.

XVI

RIDING FEES

XVI.—RIDING FEES

The public have an idea that jockeys earn large sums of money as a matter of course, but readers have never had as yet the jockey's point of view properly presented for their edification. There is a great deal of gilt to come off the gingerbread. All is not gold that glitters on the surface; few monster nuggets are found beneath. In the case of some eminent flat-race jockeys, wealth has rewarded their efforts in the pigskin; they have made a comfortable fortune; they have been careful, frugal, industrious, and their investments have been judicious. At the top of the tree in their profession, they were entitled surely to expect an adequate remuneration. Coming to consider the rank and file, however, we do not find such gorgeous emoluments. The amount of income is moderate, and expenses are heavy. Dreams of avarice are more appropriately indulged in other arenas.

Let me pose (with pleasure) as what may be termed without irreverence the "dreadful

example." We must have one, or our excursus would be lacking in verisimilitude. No jockey has ridden more horses over a country than I have; for a losing mount my fee has been five pounds, less one shilling and sixpence charged by Messrs Weatherby for collection, and for a winning mount the fee was ten pounds, less two shillings and sixpence deducted by the firm named for the same purpose. So far so good; we seem to be making money hand over fist; visions of affluence excite the mind. What cash to put by for a rainy day or two, so as to keep our feet cosily warm and dry in the stormiest weather! But, ah me! there are many *per contra* items in the account. Unless a jockey is specially engaged to ride at a certain meeting, or steers horses trained by himself, he has to pay all his own expenses. They amount to a pretty considerable total, since railway fares, hotel charges, etc., constitute an onerous series of disbursements. In fact, as a well-known racing man observed: "Our hand is never out of our pocket; and if we do not find somebody else's hand or hands there, we may esteem ourselves exceptionally lucky."

It is certainly not easy to go racing on the cheap. Cold comforters are those narrow-minded souls who preach economy in a branch of sport

where such virtue does not spring up spontaneously as a natural growth, and where its professors are not remarkable for the success of their experiments. One cannot live near edged fools —I mean tools—without being sharpened up a trifle, if not in the direction of sound finance. One cannot dwell near the rose, as alleged, without finding that, called by any other name, it is just as sweet and expensive. We have to do in Rome as Rome does, even if the noble Romans are sure to beat us all ends up at the finish.

Again, we must bear in mind that at the present time fees for riding under National Hunt Rules are reduced to three pounds three shillings, and five pounds five shillings for races of less than the advertised value of one hundred pounds; and there is the five-pound allowance to consider now granted to comparative novices. Results are sufficiently obvious. Good jockeys have to stand down in several instances whilst boys are put up to ride; and, according to a hunting philosopher, "They don't know the difference between a hurdle and a fence." He adds: "If they were able to realise such variations in the scenery, their performance would still lack artistic polish and *savoir faire*, because you cannot teach a lad to ride a good race until he has gained some idea of

what is expected from him at an unfamiliar altitude." There is assuredly no royal road to this art: it cannot be learned all at once; a strenuous apprenticeship is the only means to attain the necessary skill and ability. Even so, a little luck does us no harm.

Nor have we given as yet a full catalogue of a busy cross-country jockey's outgoings. If he is riding, say, two or three times a day, his valet has to be paid at least thirty shillings a meeting. He cannot get on very well without the assistance of that useful functionary. Thus, at the beginning of a steeplechase season, I entrust him with my breeches and boots, three saddles, weight-cloths, whip, and everything appertaining to the riding. He takes complete charge of them accordingly till the season ends. He conveys them to the various race meetings, having to pay cab fares, tips, etc., for casual help in carrying them, and so forth: it is by no means all profit so far as he is concerned. He does not attend probably on more than two or three jockeys in regular practice; his work requires constant zeal and attention. My notion is that he earns every penny he gets, and the fact is notorious that while we conduct our dealings chiefly in bronze coin, as it were, we are not likely to make a very stately procession

to the bank. Neighbours look at us as though they were about to giggle over a grave. Millionaires do not inspire that fatuous expression.

Well-known jockeys are also asked to give a variety of indiscriminate tips at the races. Somebody or other is generally "broke to the world" again. It is not always prudent to refuse those pressing solicitations. As a matter of plain truth, if a jockey were riding two winners a day, and if he were so generous as to accede to all the demands made on him in the cause of charity alone —and as a rule he is not a parsimonious sportsman, who shuts his purse, like his mouth, with a nasty snap—he might easily give all his riding fees away. What would be left to him, then, save bitter memories? Who would rush to fill his empty pockets? Such questions — after a horse has jumped on your head two or three times—are too subtle for an immediate reply.

Accidents happen to steeplechase jockeys almost inevitably, disabling them for a short or long period according to their luck at the instant of smash, and whilst thus placed *hors de combat* (perhaps in hospital with a fractured limb or two, or concussion of the cerebellum), they do not earn any riding fees. Such a fine horseman may be incapacitated for a considerable time. He is

not only in extreme pain—his sources of emolument are dried up. A kind employer comes, perhaps, to his help. He may have some sort of a little home to keep going, for such chevaliers are, after all, very human, though one might not think so to see the way in which they are knocked about, and come up smiling to ride in the next race; and their expenses continue to run on while they are lying on their back, groaning, with a nurse in constant attendance, and a doctor scarcely ever off the front doorstep. The position is not happy. And yet people feign to wonder why steeplechase jockeys do not save a great deal of money! The marvel is that they are able to save their life to a green old age, as many of them do, and die at last in the odour of sanctity, babbling of "Nationals" they might have won if they had been fortunate enough to have an "Ilex," a "Why Not," or a "Grudon" to help them on their way.

Some cross-country riders now perform occasionally for less, it is rumoured, than the usual fee. It is true that a jockey receives a nice gift sometimes after steering a well-backed candidate to victory. Various sums—I mean a sum varying in amount, not quite the same thing—may be bestowed on that successful pilot, and such

additions to his income are thoroughly acceptable. They help appreciably to swell the volume of that nest-egg which may be addling at home on account of his want of business instinct and the cunning it engenders. What is the good of his long stocking if he does not know how to conceal it effectually? It is not fair, however, to exaggerate his scale of presents. The thousand pounds that I received for winning the Grand National on "Ilex" was quite an exceptional benefaction. I have often received a "pony" with an air of thankfulness. I shall be glad to do so again. I have frequently ridden winners for which I have been paid only in harmony with the strict schedule, since a lucky owner may be a trifle shy at the last moment when his pecuniary feelings are involved. I have been "outed" in one act, so to speak, and nobody has called (with cash in fist) to see whether the curtain would ever rise again. There are employers of labour who believe apparently that the labourer is not worthy of his hire until he begins to stagger about from fatigue and other causes, indicating that if he toils much longer he will have to be removed from the ridiculous, if not disreputable, scene on a shutter. Riding winners is not, in effect, the most rapid road to wealth, and

backing them represents a shorter cut thither, so long as one is able to maintain a respectable average, and is not "pinched" unduly in the price.

Yet, in the course of my variegated riding adventures at home and abroad, I have never sought to obtrude the sordid view. Pictures of destitution in embryo or in disguise have not haunted my mind, I have enjoyed the sport for its own sake, my heart has been in the work, I have always been very fond of riding; and if it happened occasionally, in this country or that, that I did not receive what I thought I deserved —how many of us are in the same boat, going down, maybe, for the last time!—I have never made any particular outcry. It is no use weeping bitterly when the man with the money-bags has turned the corner at a furious pace. And an old jockey told me the other day that if he had been paid all his riding fees, he would now be one of the most opulent burghers in his cottage community.

Yes, I have had mine; there is nothing owing, and they do not form an unpleasant reminiscence. I have had plenty of fun for my money, even if I have not plenty of money now. The saddle has been one of the best and most profitable seats

that I have ever enjoyed. All the same, however, the public must not run away with the idea that a steeplechase jockey receives such fabulous sums that he is sure to become rich in a hurry. "The jingling of the guinea heals the hurts" which he is bound to suffer; and if he can save a few guineas to maintain him when his wounds have put him out of action, he must be thankful. Many stormy careers end less peacefully.

XVII

RACING STORIES

XVII.—RACING STORIES

After riding at one of the Nice meetings, where I experienced such consistently bad luck that my state of mind was not happy, I met a brother jockey in the evening. He was a good sort—one of the best—and he noted my despondent mood with anything but appreciation. His sense of humour, always keen, was outraged by my lack of sparkle.

"What!" he cried cynically, "down in the mouth, eh? You *must* keep a stiff upper lip, even if there is no 'down' on it, dear boy, and face the music smiling." His cordial ministrations were exhilarating. I was still sore from a fall, a few of my ribs seemed to be bent, and, oh yes, my nose—which has been described to me as a not unassuming feature—was considerably scarified. All the world was sad and gloomy for a small jockey who had not been recently riding winners. The need of consolation was urgent. Was it possible that, with my luck so bad just

then, I had met with the right kind of genial, irresponsible conspirator? He said so. My acceptance of his invitation to join in what he gracefully termed "a symposium" was applauded with effusion.

"That is wise," he affirmed, "because if you cannot ride winners for the moment, you can listen while I talk about them for several hours."

He certainly talked about them for a long time with immense volubility, with an ever-flowing eloquence. The loving-cup was handed round; sips and sighs, giggles and gargles, marked our progress in the right direction; we might have been looking for truth at the bottom of the mug, expecting to find it, as usual, amongst the dregs. Life assumed a more roseate aspect. My vivacious host lighted a cigar and gave me one, also a match; he seemed to be full of generous impulses—it was delightful.

"Talking about winners," he said, "you are, of course, bitter if you can't steer three or four every afternoon, and thus smother your chest with golden medals. A little chastening does none of us any harm. And have you heard the story of old Tim Byles, the jockey, who did not ride a winner in three years?"

Not for three years! Poor chap! It was

worse than my three hours; and, accordingly, I expressed my sympathy with that unfortunate horseman. There may have been reasons which did not appear on the card. Some of his mounts were not, perhaps, very strenuous, I suggested by way of a joke, adding, to maintain the illusion: "But what I know about 'stumers' you might put into your pipe and smoke it without being conscious of the nicotine." I gave a huge puff to illustrate the beauty of that simile: it made a hit.

"Old Tim Byles," said my flippant host, "was noted for his skill in handling horses of the class (not too strenuous) at which you have darkly hinted. He rarely rode any others. He was at the post for a mile race some years ago (such things are not heard of now), and he was not anxious to get off. He dawdled about, and would not join his horses, so the starter lost patience, and asked him whether he was on a genuine or an ornamental candidate. 'Pon my word, sir,' growled Tim, '*I have forgotten.*' He was left, though he remembered—alas! too late—that his orders were strictly—er—canonical."

A brief interlude having been allowed for the story to sink in and to be duly assimilated—dare I say liquidated?—my genial host dashed off the

mark again as though sprinting were really his *forte*, with a precipitous course for choice.

"At this very fixture," he ran on, meaning Nice, "only two runners went to the post for a race—I don't know or care how long ago—and the betting was close. A cunning 'Sheenie' punter asked another of the same tribe which of the two runners he was to back. 'Back neither,' was the prompt retort; '*they are both trying*.'"

How could one wager with animation under such desperate conditions? It would have been like flying with clipped wings in the face of Providence.

Now fairly getting into his stride, and taking hold of his bit resolutely, my festive host turned to me with a brisk gesture indicative of extreme emotion on his part. Something had tickled his fancy on the spur of the moment. He asked this question: "Do you remember fat Putty, the jockey's valet, who ran into, and out of, a lot of money by backing horses?"

"Why, yes, dear boy," I replied dreamily, "I remember him very well. He dressed me once to ride in a selling race, and after I had won it he was not sure which was to be sold—the horse or me."

"He waited on jockeys so long," said my indefatigable entertainer, "that he began to fancy that he was a jockey himself, though he could not ride for toffee. At exercise, before the races, he was allowed to mount an ancient 'chaser and hang on to him during what was intended to be a steady mile canter. He was not able to hold his horse, who thought he knew his way home across country (he was 150 miles from that haven) by a short-cut or bridle-path: so off he went like a wild cat with a squib under its tail; and poor Putty has not been seen since. The story goes that he dashed at racing pace into the next parish, jumping several brick buildings in his course of transit, and was then captured by the local inspector of nuisances, who certified that he had been insane since the loss of his last penny. The shock of being a jockey must have turned his brain, and thus completed the work which Nature had begun. Putty now dwells in an asylum, where his chief occupation is to lay the inmates under the odds against 'stumers' tipped to them by himself."

Gradually forgetting my bad luck at that beautiful Nice meeting—and sometimes it is as difficult to ride a winner as to kiss a girl whose coyness is acquired, not natural—I realised the

fact that it was not absolutely necessary for me to give the other fellow a walk over, which is often as unromantic as a miss in baulk. Why not weigh in with my own modest contribution? He was evidently thinking of another thrilling storyette—for, like most great talkers, he was a great liar in a general way—so I made play as follows, striving not to rush my fences:

"I once rode in a 2-mile race here when the 'going' was rather heavy, and my mount was not quite fit or clean inside, his respiration being difficult towards the finish, whilst his sides heaved. Returning, covered in steam, to the paddock, I asked a colleague identified with the training business what he thought of my noisy steed. 'Well,' he made answer, 'I went up to examine him rather unsteadily, for I had been carousing with dear friends who go a strong gallop all the way, when he turned his head, b-blowing so hard that he b-blew me down!'"

"You are getting better, Arthur," observed my frivolous associate, after I had unburdened my mind of that veracious anecdote. "All you want now is to tell the tale in a bank when the chief cashier is absent and the gold deposits have been placed under your sole control. You would not," he added facetiously, "be charged with—

er—effeminacy on that occasion. The charge would be less hysterical."

Permitting him to score that harmless thrust at my expense, since one must give and take (give what you don't want, take all you can) in these exchanges of badinage, I informed him that if he were unable to ride winners at Nice after a period of "wasting," he was not certain to be regarded by the natives as a jockey of an unimpeachable pedigree and renown. "Losing on a hot favourite," I explained, "is like bringing down coals of fire on your head."

He nodded approvingly, and remarked that "wasting" was wicked when the flesh was weak, and it was our own flesh, to say nothing of blood. "If you *must* do it"—and he glanced at me as if I were a "waster" of the first water—"give it up before the evil takes such a hold on you that you have not strength enough to grasp anything else."

He then told the story of a jockey who would have won the Grand National, he alleged, only he lost consciousness at the Canal Point, and turned after the others by a miracle. He had got off about 10 lbs. in two days so as to do the weight, and he said after the last race:

"My mare was going very well up to the time that I remember. I thought I was sure to win,

and the rest was a blank to me. How I got over the last few fences is one of those mysteries which, if explained, would not cease to startle folks interested in such weird sporting problems. Taken out of the saddle, my reason returned—it is often the case—and as I had seen no horses in front of me, I acclaimed myself proudly as the winner. Nobody objected to me; it was not worth while." . . . It is easy enough to fancy oneself a winner, of course, but the bookmakers do not pay over such conceptions.

With an imperial wave of his cigar, my volatile host, whose symposium was perfectly successful, took up the running again, as thus:

"You knew old Peter Mubbles, who used to keep horses for a long time so as to win valuable handicaps? 'Readying' was his strong suit. He was a man of infinite patience; some of his old 'uns were monsters of iniquity. At a certain stage of his career, when he was not knocking spots off the enemy at every corner, Peter had been 'waiting' with a three-year-old to win a nice stake, and the colt had been growing fast at the same time. While he was getting weight off, so to say, he was putting height on; a result being that when he was stripped for the fray about a year later he was quite a huge creature.

He had to carry a 6-st. lad, who looked like a worble on his back. The boy was virtually helpless on him, and he finished nearer last than first, not having turned a hair. The grief expressed by Peter after that *contretemps* was vastly appreciated by a few of his leading cronies. 'My horse,' he told them, 'was too big, and my jockey was too little. There was no sense of proportion, and between the two irreconcilables I could not have won a slice of stale cake at a cat show in the suburbs.'

"Incited to continue his flowery language—for if we can make fools of ourselves our leading cronies are sure to be in at the death—Peter went on, unabashed:

"'My rod in pickle was too briny, he had been in soak too long, his trifling jockey had not sense or strength enough to flick at him superciliously *en route*; and, verily, I had overdone the trick, like an amateur *chef* who knows what the meat is after he has swallowed a most noxious portion. My horse could have won with another stone in the saddle, and what I put on him in the shape of a jockey was not enough to steady him as blessed ballast.'"

The symposium ended, the last wave of cigar accomplished, the last story told with an air

of belief extraordinary in the circumstances, I managed to tear myself away from my brother jockey in a brighter frame of mind. Our evening at Nice had not been wasted. Some of his tales were not, perhaps, technically true. A rift within the lute might be detected here and there. But if a licensed jester scores once in ten times he does not deserve to have his licence taken away—not until his humour shows signs of decomposition.

XVIII

RIDES IN THE "NATIONAL"

XVIII.—RIDES IN THE "NATIONAL"

In addition to winning the Grand National Steeplechase three times — an achievement of which I am not a little proud in moments of rare exultation—I have had several unsuccessful mounts in the great Aintree race. It has been a sort of happy hunting-ground of mine. As a matter of fact, I have ridden in it fifteen times, and have only fallen twice, though I was knocked over on "Detail" by the King's horse, "Ambush," then loose. That mishap made no difference to the ultimate result so far as I was concerned. "Detail" was well beaten at the moment of his undoing, and his subsequent running showed that he had lost his form. Yet, of course, unkind things were said about his jockey. It seems that we cannot always hope to escape calumny when we put on our breeches and boots. But what sporting associations they suggest to a mind not diseased! If the horse—it is a pious aspiration—be only good enough!

My first ride in the "National" was in 1886, when I steered Baron de Tuyll's "The Badger," and was unplaced. Curiously, "Frigate," a grand jumper, fell at the first fence that year; she was ridden by the late John Jones, who told me afterwards that if he had fallen off her he could not have been more astonished. In 1887 I did not perform in this race, but my brother William rode "Sinbad," trained by my father, and owned by Mr J. Percival, who was then a large and well-known bookmaker. The end of "Sinbad" was tragical. In a steeplechase at Sandown he was again ridden by W. Nightingall, whilst I had the leg-up on Sir Simon Lockhart's "Silver Chief"—both horses were in our stable—in the same race. Both fell when leading at the last fence, and "Sinbad" put his shoulder out, so that he had to be destroyed. Our "grief" let up old Jack Childs, who won on "Johnny Longtail." Such are the fortunes of war. We must be thankful if we do not lose part of our scalp and all our money.

In 1888 I steered "The Badger" again at Aintree, and was again unsuccessful. He was a useful horse, and had won a number of hunters' steeplechases, but he was not quite up to "Liverpool" form. In that year the cross-

country championship was won by "Playfair," beautifully ridden by the late George Mawson. A funny incident occurred to him during the course of that journey. His horse hit a fence hard, with the result that he was shot on to the animal's neck, and he could not get back into the saddle. Galloping by his side, I said: "Where are you going to, George?" and helped him to regain his seat. "Thank the Lord!" he exclaimed devoutly, when he was safely restored, "this ought to be a 'pinch' for me now"; and it was so. He might have wriggled back without my assistance, but it certainly did not look a "good thing" for him. One's saddle seems to be such a long way off when one is on the horse's neck and he keeps his head down.

In 1889 I was third in the "National" on "M.P.," "Frigate" winning; in 1890 I was victorious on "Ilex," as recorded; in 1891 I was third on "Ilex," also third on him in the following year, when, carrying 12 st. 7 lb., he broke down and ran a great horse on three legs; in 1893 I was third on "Why Not," who won at the next time of asking with the Eminent Author (that's me) in the saddle. It was an inspiriting contest, a glorious finish; but I need not describe it again—I'd rather ride it again,

though, unhappily, such pleasant experiences are not often repeated. In 1895 I was entrusted with the handling of the favourite, Captain M. Hughe's "Æsop," who fell; in 1896 I rode "Why Not" again, and was nowhere, the winner being "The Soarer," both he and "Why Not" being trained by Mr W. H. Moore; in 1897 I did not appear in the big Aintree event, an arrangement falling through at the last moment; and in 1898 my adventures were rather exciting. I steered "The Soarer" when he accomplished (what has been poetically termed) an imperial "buster" at the brook, sending me yards. He had a sort of polypus in his head, and gradually choked after galloping some distance. Having gone about 2½ miles he was in trouble, and Jim Hickey, the Australian jockey, who was on "Grudon," called out to me to stop, or I might have reason to regret the day's festivity.

"Oh yes," I answered, with the fire of battle in my heart, "I'll stop all right, my boy, when I get over the brook"; and little did I think that my words would come so literally true. "The Soarer" fell at the brook, as mentioned—it was snowing slightly at the time—and knocked me silly. I stopped far more suddenly than anticipated. My impressions of the surrounding

scenery were so vague and chaotic that they could not be set down on paper by the most Eminent Author—which is a reason why even I shirk the job. One is not knocked silly many times without feeling so—perhaps permanently.

In 1899 I was engaged to ride "Zeebee" at Liverpool, but an attack of gout interfered with that arrangement, and compelled me to stand down, on uneasy feet. Nor was I called upon to perform in the following year—I forget why, and if the cause were profusely illustrated I do not imagine that readers would thank me for incurring the extra expense—but in 1901 I was to the front again on "Grudon" in that memorable snowstorm, as already described. Shrewd sportsmen are asked kindly to remember the butter in his feet; it may have helped appreciably to do the trick in style. As a wag told me after the event: "You carried 2 lbs. extra, old chap—2 lbs. of butter—and if you'd had a bit of cheese up your sleeve, you couldn't have had 'em more beautifully on toast." I was obliged to laugh—at what I did not know until some time after the coruscation had subsided. Even then I was not certain. Many jesters have an audience like that, who laugh first and think afterwards, or they would not have laughed

at all. What a loss to a few of their dearest friends!

In 1902 my acquaintance with "Detail" commenced. That horse was owned by a lady, and it did not seem to me that he was always managed in the most judicious manner possible. My desire is, however, to keep this chronicle absolutely free from all controversial matter: if we do not try to cheer up the blind man we need not cause annoyance to the blind man's dog. "Detail's" Grand National record may be thus succinctly stated: 1902, fourth, ridden by me; 1903, second, ridden by me; 1904, knocked over, ridden by me; 1905, fell, ridden by Cowley. It would be easy for me to write a great deal concerning this horse and the "National," but, as intimated, my intention is to keep these chapters light, breezy, innocent of acrimonious allusion. Their genial sporting interest is thus preserved. I always did my best for "Detail," and I need say no more, even if other people have said too much. My position in regard to the matter has been amply vindicated by subsequent events.

In the same year (1894) when I won the Liverpool Grand National on "Why Not," I also rode the winner of the Scottish Grand National. My mount on that occasion was

Captain J. M. Gordon's "Leybourne," who proved to be a nice, safe conveyance, and scored in clever fashion. Not equally fortunate was I in the same race in 1895, when I steered Mr R. G. Allen's "Aerolite," trained by myself, and he gave me rather a picturesque "toss." It took me some time to collect my scattered faculties. The shooting stars that danced before my eyes were not of my own manufacture. Said the inevitable wag, after I had risen with difficulty: "As an acrobat, dear boy, you would assuredly make a fortune, but why do you perform without a net? It's flying in the face of Providence to risk a nose like that"—he pointed at mine, but he was afraid to pull it—"without the necessary protective apparatus underneath."

Why does it happen, by-the-bye, that when one longs to meet a sympathetic friend —as just after a wicked "crumpler" that has almost disjointed us—one encounters a sort of Job's comforter who tries to be funny at our small expense? He expects us to see the point of an obscure joke — maybe there is no point —when our senses have scarcely returned to us. I would have such persons chained up whilst an unfortunate jockey is recovering his reason. He

may not be successful in that feat till his savings are exhausted.

Once, for instance, a stranger asked me at Aintree—after I had had a fall, but not in the "National"—whether I was seriously hurt—I was severely shaken — also whether I enjoyed pain for its own sake or for its consequent emoluments, and whether I thought the play was worth the candle, considering that the candle was liable to be extinguished at any moment. "The slightest puff," he said, "and pop goes the weasel." It was impossible for me to answer categorically. I promised to obtain the desired information for him without delay, and to send it to any address that he would be kind enough to impart to me, with injunctions as to the strictest secrecy. Those jokers at the races are often irresistible, but they are prone to be less scintillating when they are "broke" again.

On the whole, after mature reflection of course, I have come to the conclusion that the race which has given me the greatest pleasure in life —though I *have* ridden in the Derby—is the Grand National. There is so much incident, so much excitement, the "lepping" is so delightful. The struggle is strenuous, the pace hot from start to finish. Everybody is eager to watch the

fray. Where can we find an equally glorious sporting spectacle?

I have been exceptionally fortunate, perhaps, at Aintree; hence my uncurbed enthusiasm. I have had good horses to ride, generous employers, and only two falls. I do not think that my all-round record in regard to the "National" is equalled by that of any living jockey; and, whilst nothing is farther from my thoughts than to boast of my achievements, I look back on that record with a certain amount of satisfaction. If I live to be a hundred—and considering my age now and the knocking about I have had, that is improbable—I shall not be able to run up a better score. I love to hear the word "Aintree" pronounced, even in a hushed whisper, for it gives me a few joyous thrills.

XIX

"OLD BUCK," AND OTHERS

XIX.—"OLD BUCK," AND OTHERS

THE history of "Old Buck," the sire of "Grudon" and other good 'chasers, reads like a page of romance. I often think, indeed, that if an accurate record were written of the lives of celebrated race-horses — assuming the author to have a full appreciation and practical knowledge of his subject — the result would be extremely interesting. What equine ups and downs would be thus revealed! Those changes experienced by human beings, wonderful enough sometimes, are unromantic in comparison with the vicissitudes just indicated. If race-horses could only talk or, preferably, write a little!

Naturally I take a great interest in the "Old Buck" family, having steered "Grudon" to victory in the Grand National when the snow was falling; and I have received some valuable information from Mr Bernard Bletsoe, of Denton, the owner of those horses, with reference to their brilliant sporting career. It

has been marked by sundry purple patches; there are not a few thrills. We find our heroes first in the kitchen, next in the parlour, then in the drawing-room, never up the chimney. They have always maintained their dignity and pride of birth; there is no slur on their escutcheon, no blot on the caste.

"Old Buck" once belonged to my father—I believe as a two-year-old—and afterwards he was sold to the late Jesse Wingfield, of Epsom, who subsequently disposed of him to Colonel Hill, of Wollaston Hall, near Grendon, where Mr Bletsoe used to live. Colonel Hill bought the horse to cover hunter mares in the district named, but very few owners cared to use him, and he had more cart mares than anything else. The produce, however, turned out to be very useful hunters. One of them—despite its plebeian origin on the dam's side—won several prizes in the show ring and a good point-to-point steeplechase. Mr Bletsoe happened to see "Old Buck" when he was five years old being led about Wellingborough Market, and asked the man leading him what horse it was. The person in charge handed him a card with the pedigree set out, and he agreed at once to put five mares to him. The fee was then two pounds a mare.

The result was so satisfactory that Mr Bletsoe continued to put all his mares to "Old Buck," and at the end of three years was particularly struck with the young stock. In the meantime Colonel Hill wished to make "Old Buck" draw his dog-cart, which that gallant steed promptly kicked to pieces. He was then degraded into the plough team, but he would not have anything to do with such unpicturesque work; he rebelled emphatically, and was turned into a field with some farm horses—probably to get used to them. He quickly set about one of his companions, and killed it by tearing its throat out. Alarums and excursions followed as a matter of course; the news went round that there was a rare fire-eater in the parish. Hearing that "Old Buck" was then for sale, and undaunted by his terrible reputation, Mr Bletsoe sent a message to Colonel Hill, stating that he should like to buy him. But it was believed that he had become really dangerous; and, accordingly, Colonel Hill sent him away out of the district, informing his would-be purchaser that he would not hear any more of this fierce stallion.

But the Fates decreed otherwise, and truly we never know our luck in this sporting world. A

few years after the period under review, Mr Bletsoe began to run some of his young stock bred on the method indicated, when they soon commenced to win races. He then received a letter from Mr Tyler, a hunting gentleman in Devonshire, asking what sort of mares he had put to "Old Buck," as Mr Tyler owned the horse and had noticed that his stock were successful on the racecourse. Diplomatic negotiations were initiated; the excitement was conceivably intense.

In brief, Mr Bletsoe gave Mr Tyler the information desired, at the same time asking if "Old Buck" were for sale. The answer was, "Yes; price twenty-five pounds." Mr Bletsoe forwarded a cheque for that amount, also instructions for the horse to be sent by the next train. He was cautioned to be very careful in his treatment of his new acquisition, since the latter had turned savage, though Mr Bletsoe informs me that he had never the least trouble with the old fellow, and that it was always the youngest lads' work to attend to him out of the season.

Mr Bletsoe kept him till he was twenty-four years old, when he was obliged to have him destroyed on account of teeth troubles. He was the quietest entire horse his owner ever knew,

and "Grudon," I am glad to say, has followed his example. "Grudon" was certainly a great 'chaser in the snowstorm on that eventful day at Aintree when, ridden by the Eminent Author, who had a comparatively easy job, he won our greatest steeplechase with immense distinction and butter in his feet. I have never enjoyed a more charming ride.

The romance of this equine family is seemingly inexhaustible. "Grudon's" dam, "Avis," was bought by Mr Bletsoe out of a doctor's gig at Wellington in Shropshire. She was by "Sugar Plum," and as he had purchased several of that breed and found they could gallop, he gave forty pounds for her. His idea was that "Avis" looked like going as soon as he saw her. He had her over a few fences, and also rode her with hounds. One day they participated in a good run with the Fitzwilliam Hounds in the Connington low country, when "Avis" distinguished herself considerably, and her owner found her to be much above the average. He put her into regular work, with the intention of running her at the local hunt meetings.

Just at that time, however, Count Charles Kinsky—who had been a good customer to Mr

Bletsoe for hunters, having once owned "Kilworth," a horse that the former picked up as a two-year-old in a farmer's straw yard for twenty-five pounds—happened to see "Avis." He asked what her price was, for he wanted her to win a steeplechase. Count Kinsky was then riding his own horses — he won the "National" on "Zoedone" — but, unfortunately, he broke his arm whilst steering "Kilworth" at Sandown, with the result that, after he had bought "Avis," Mr E. P. Wilson rode her for him in the three steeplechases in which he had entered her; she won all three.

She was then sent to Newmarket to be trained to win a race on the flat, when she broke down, and afterwards Mr Bletsoe bought her back for a brood mare for seventy pounds. Following that transaction, he went into Shropshire again and tried to find the rest of her family, but only succeeded in getting her dam, "Wings," who bred him "Old Times." He was never able to find out her pedigree, so that "Avis" and "Grudon" had to remain as half-bred ones. Now, judging from the appearance of both "Wings" and "Avis," if any mares were thoroughbred, according to my estimable informant, they must have been so. "Wings"

was brought over from Ireland, I believe, by Captain Grissell, and won a maiden hunters' steeplechase at Aldershot for half-bred horses. That was on 27th April 1872, when she was called "Wiry Sal," being afterwards renamed "Wings." She must have been a rare good sort.

Here, too, is a little more interesting information about my old friend, "Grudon," who seems to have had bad luck in regard to his show experiences. Mr Bletsoe writes to me as follows:

"I was induced last spring to send 'Grudon' to the Hunters' Improvement Show, London, when two young veterinary surgeons appointed to examine the horses declared that he had a ringbone, and as there was no appeal, he was not allowed to go into the ring. What appeared to them to be a ringbone was the result of the accident when you rode him in the Lancashire Steeplechase, and he split his pastern. He stood training for nine consecutive years, including a preparation for three "Nationals" and twice for the Paris Steeplechase; he is perfectly sound and a fine mover now."

According to my judgment, "Grudon" is just the sort of horse that ought to be encouraged by the Hunters' Improvement Society, because we know—and nobody has more reason to know it than I have—that he could go fast, and stay,

and was a splendid jumper. What more do they want? He was a beautiful horse to ride over fences, and a "smasher" when he carried me to victory at Liverpool in the snow. It was a fine performance. We might have gone round again, as hinted, but there would have been little sense in giving an "extra turn," which meant no additions to our golden store. The high contracting parties expect to get some money, of course, or they would quickly strike out for plunder in a different hemisphere.

The particulars given by Mr Bletsoe are so full of interest to all sporting readers that I am tempted to cull another extract from his missive, to wit:

"Relating to 'Grudon,' I may add that my daughter rode him regularly to hounds as a three-year-old, and several times each season up to Christmas. Racing never made any difference to him as a hunter; he was always quiet in the hunting-field, and never got excited when hounds were running. My daughter says that he was one of the most sensible horses she ever rode, and she steered him in nearly all his work when he was in training."

Light weight and light "hands" are certainly useful qualifications for that sporting exercise.

We thus obtain what may be termed an inside

MR. B. BLETSOE'S GRUDON—Grand National Winner, 1901.

glimpse of an extraordinary equine family that has given us a number of sterling 'chasers. They have stamped their name on the scroll of fame, and any one—either horse or man or dog—who has done that deserves surely a word or two (not more) of praise. We cannot afford to be too prodigal in these hard times with respect to our chorus of recognition. Yet, as an old jockey used to say, "A good horse is always good, especially when he produces a better"—kindly note the sequence of "Old Buck" and "Grudon"—"and a good man is never better till he achieves a similar feat, which does not come off once in ten times."

XX

THE THREE "T'S"; OR, TRAINERS, TOUTS, AND TIPSTERS

XX.—THE THREE "T'S"; OR, TRAINERS, TOUTS, AND TIPSTERS

Amongst the sporting topics which claim attention in this record of my Adventures may be classed appropriately the professors embraced by the above comprehensive heading. They are interesting and worth study.

When I was occupied in training race-horses, I was pleased, rather than otherwise, to see the touts come after them, because I knew then that I had something in my stable good enough to demand their consideration. Bad horses do not appeal to their æsthetic sense; they can get no money out of useless performers in the racing arena. Nor was I afraid of the touts in any sense, even when they were extra-specially vigilant. They were quite at liberty to watch all my trials if they chose to do so; but, of course, they were not informed as to the weights carried or other local conditions, and they did not

necessarily realise which horse was actually being tested. Some of these gentlemen are not likely to do their customers much harm unless cash is recklessly invested on the strength of their "information." If all trials were right and true, there would, as an owner has averred, soon be no bookmakers in existence, and whom then should we have to dash at with impunity? The question is too painful for discussion in this chaste excursus.

Like many trainers of the old school, my father did not love the "men of observation." I have known him to bring horses out of a morning, give them a couple of canters on the Downs, send them home, and have them out again in the afternoon, so as to try them when the touts were probably indulging in a Bacchanalian siesta. His delight was to get the best of those connoisseurs, and his success was often so marked that they wondered where they had been at the wrong moment. Their wiles, however, were not a little ingenious. When, for instance, a good hurdle race-horse ("Courtier," on whom I won the Sandown Grand Prize) was in our stable, he was tried at Walton, our "schooling" ground, and one of the local touts had been waiting for days to obtain a view of that gallop. Eventually

he travelled to the scene of action in a brewer's cart, being artfully secreted among the beer barrels—he was quite at home there!—but what he saw of the spin I do not know. The chances are that it did not put a great deal of coin into his purse. Sport does not always treat its humble servitors very well when they have no sort of nest-egg to cackle about in their declining years. Oh, for a start again with a different kind of patent martingale to keep our head down!

A great trial took place at Newmarket some years ago, and no account of it has ever been published. It was a gallop of 4½ miles over hurdles by moonlight (or pretty nearly so); there was a "National" candidate included, and the jockeys who rode in it were R. Marsh (the King's trainer), R. I'Anson, Jem Adams, and D. Thirlwell. They took the horses out of the stable as soon as it was light enough for their purpose—they were not particular as to a gleam or two—and after a gallop they rode their mounts back, "did" them up all right, and not a lad in the yard knew that a horse had been out that morning. "But," said my friend, Jem Adams, telling me the story, "those hurdles did not half rattle, I give you *my* word; and at the end of our long

journey I was glad to get off my steed and see if he could prop himself up against a haystack or something without gasping for my assistance."

James Adams, a great jockey in his day, has still a pretty wit, and he is glad to exercise it, regardless of expense, for the delectation of his brother churchwardens. They are never tired of listening with the accompaniments of pipe and glass to his merry stories.

Modern trainers, as hinted, are not continually trying to delude the touts, who do their best, and they were never a source of anxiety or trouble to me when I had a lot of useful horses in my stable. "Live and let live" was my policy; we shall all die soon enough. My "good things" were not given away as a result of external machinations. The knowledge possessed by the "Brussels sprouts" relative to my "flyers" might have been put into a pill-box and shaken vigorously without bursting the lid. And when, as once occurred, one of those lynx-eyed professors reported a horse to have done a fast 3-mile gallop after that animal had been dead a month, we must be excused for indulging in a little childish mirthfulness. It is so heartening when our lucky star is not in the ascendant or is sulking behind a cloud.

"Why, yes," said a budding tout on the Downs,

"I know what the horses are doing here, but I do *not* know what they are doing on the blessed course; and, in my opinion, it is *this*"—he held up a scrubby pencil—"which often stops them when I dare to have half a dollar on each way." That is, alas! what people are apt to say when they have lost their money in Tattersall's ring. If, they murmur, the reins had only broken! Yet, assuredly, owners, trainers, and jockeys, to say nothing about the horse, are thankful to win races at every favourable opportunity. "Pencilitis," forsooth! Perish the ignoble thought! We are eager to score when we can, for, apart from the sordid considerations, such success is our chief, if not our only, *raison d'être.* Take it from us, and we are like fishes out of water through no fault of their own; we may be even a trifle white about the gills, gadshooks; but I am not betting on that change of tint as though it were an absolutely piscatorial "pinch." Anglers are not assumed to speak the truth when their subject is congenial.

Funny stories by the dozen are told about the least of the terrible "T's"—the poor tipsters. One of them, who did not understand his business, "gave" a dead horse to win a valuable handicap—he thought the animal was in training,

but he was in his grave—and when clients remonstrated with that false prophet on account of his audacity, he professed to cherish a becoming horror of the situation. "What!" he cried indignantly. "The horse dead, is he? And what of it? Has nobody ever heard of 'dead meat' before in the betting market? and who am I that I should not be allowed occasionally to handle a putrid morsel?" Nobody questioned his fitness for the job.

With regard, moreover, to this branch of our enthralling subject, I have received a note from a Turfite of many years' exciting experience, and from it I may cull the following choice passage:

"Whilst a few 'men of observation' may die in the odour of sanctity, most of them rarely have any money at that time or afterwards—I mean previously. They give what they earn 'a run,' and are surprised at the smallness of their wage remnant. As one of the tribe avowed in the hour of his supreme anguish—for the brokers had visited him, and he was sleeping with his family in a loose-box—'I make my money out of horses, and I am ass enough to lose it in the same way.' Such a genuine lamentation ought to arouse our warmest sympathy, if we have any—which is not likely, considering the present price of under-done steak and inferior beer."

The remark has been made by a professional cynic that nobody need be afraid of the tipster, unless he is a tipster himself; and, passing by such flippant suggestions, I may mention that, when I was training at Priam Lodge, Epsom, some of those artists afforded me a great deal of wholesome amusement. One of them wrote to me saying that he was about to be married without means—we do not all wait for the sinews of war before we dash into battle—and that if I would send him the name of my next likely winner, he would christen his first baby after me. After me, too, as if he made a certainty of having two or three babies soon! It seemed like flying in the face of Providence to express such confidence before the weights were issued.

Another member of the same fraternity, who had been having a bad time, implored me, with tears in his voice, to tell him a winner, or his next Sunday observance would be his last. "I intend," he declared, "to scandalise my neighbours, fair and otherwise, by slaughtering myself brutally near the chancel." He may have done so quite near the chancel, for I have never seen him since.

In fact, trainers and jockeys receive a variety of curious letters which tickle their fancy to the

explosive point. One scribe, purporting to be a sort of "watcher," honoured me with an epistle from which I make an extract, to wit:

"Pray excuse me, a stranger and no Blucher at that, for trespassing on your time and attention; but if I don't somebody else will, and I like to have the first run. Take no notice of the weary touts who may surround you. What they chiefly enjoy (next to four 'arf) is plenty of fresh air with idleness, and if the ozone were not cheap as well as fresh, they could not fill their stomachs at the price. If they did not do some of their work lying down, it would not be done at all, and a good job, too. I am a practical judge of the race-horse from his cradle to the grave, and I'm not afraid to put my money on him like a man—when I have any money worth spitting on for luck. My income is, however, generally in the clouds rolling by instead of in my pocket, and when I go shopping now my wife carries the basket—for ornament, not for use. But when boon companions, who are certainly no boon, tell me, in the hour of rude festivity, that there are few good tipsters, and that, if they were followed consistently all the year round, they would break the Bank of England unless that institution made it a rule never to have more than a dollar on each way, I am at a loss how to wither them by my scorn. Can you help me, Arthur, and ease my troubled mind?"

It was impossible for me to help him, or to

throw oil on the troubled waters of his mind. Moisture on the brain is not easily accessible, if we may believe the scientists, whose tips do not always come off. Neither touts nor tipsters have interfered with me in the performance of my work, and I do not wish to say a word in their disparagement. But, as alleged, their occupation is not so lucrative, generally speaking, as it was some years ago. Clients are, perhaps, suffering from a too-common malady—not want of faith so much as want of funds. It seems that we cannot have both in abundance at the same time. Wages and wagers do not always blend with a perfect harmony.

"No debt is really good," affirms an oracle at command, "until it is collected and the money paid into the bank with a sigh or two of relief; also, no race is a certainty till the winner has passed the post with his head in his chest, has weighed in all right, and has survived three objections." Those ancient oracles were caustic in utterance, and the marvel is that they were not suppressed by Act of Parliament before they began to air their views as freely as though they were on a desert or cannibal island.

Nor had I ever much trouble in connection with the lads employed in my stable. They

were not accustomed to send "information" away to a select circle of private punters. Verily, they were not allowed to know a great deal, and to keep them in ignorance is the best way to keep them straight. Some of these boys like to "have their bit on," of course; the horse they "do" is always going to win, according to their estimate of his chance; but that confidence on their part did not interfere with my patrons or with me when we wished to back a horse with—dare I say?—infinite gusto. There is, by-the-bye, a good story told concerning a smart lad in a Newmarket stable; his master discovered that he was betting pretty heavily, and accused him of doing so. "I hear," growled the irate trainer, "that you had a hundred on my horse last week when he won."

"Your mistake, guv'nor," retorted the youth, smiling; "you are quite wrong. I had three hundred on him; and if I had possessed another three hundred in the world, every penny would have been invested on the same buxom steed."

A bright sporting association was thus ended, and that smart lad developed into a professional backer. Often he had plenty of money, sometimes none. Yet, ah me! how true it is that

two very clever men do not row well together for long in the same boat; there is too much "splash." Not necessarily do they wish to rob each other, but the evidence points that way. They have their doubts.

XXI

"SCHOOLING"

XXI.—"SCHOOLING"

Ordinary visitors, who attend such meetings as Sandown and Kempton so as to watch horses flying over fences, have little or no idea as to the amount of time and trouble expended on the thorough "schooling" of those beautiful "leppers." Their education is not such a simple matter as some of the critics think it is—they who do the looking on, not the riding. Incidental risks are connected with the work inevitably; jockeys "chance" their necks in the usual way as though life had few charms for them except in a racing capacity; they face the prospect of a fall with countenance irradiated. It is no use their seeing the red light. When their pluck is gone they might as well "go out" themselves at once, since they are not likely to do any good by their riding either at home or abroad. Loss of nerve means loss of income in this profession. "When you begin to funk, my lad," said a fat trainer to his thin jockey, "it

is time to pawn your breeches and boots; and what you wear afterwards will be for the sake of decency, not for sport." What sense in a nutshell!

With regard to the practice of "schooling" young thoroughbreds to jump for racing I may appropriately give a few words of description. Methods differ as to points of detail, but the main principle is the same. For my own part, when I have a young one to teach, I like to put him loose in a school over some bars not very high and hunt him round with a whip. He soon begins to learn what he is required to do. If he raps his shins a little it will do him no harm; it will help, indeed, to facilitate the educational process, for he is pretty certain to have a good memory.

After treating him to that novel experience, and giving him every encouragement, I should next ride him over small hurdles with an old horse—that is, a reliable and capable jumper—to lead or go alongside him. In the majority of cases he manages to get over somehow; if he falls over, as he may easily do, his jockey need not expostulate with him roughly or otherwise. We must hope for better luck next time. One cannot have omelettes without breaking eggs;

the fresher they are the more sincere is our thankfulness; and one cannot have accomplished jumpers without breaking a few bones occasionally. A jockey's bones, lightly covered, are never likely to be of much value to him or to anybody else except for the purpose of riding winners.

An important point in regard to "schooling" is not to go too fast at first; let the young ones learn how to take off properly before you try to race them. That is an ordinance not invariably observed. We often see lads driving their inexperienced mounts at top speed over hurdles—a great mistake. It does not give the young ones a fair chance. It is like asking a child to run before he has really mastered the art of walking with perfect nonchalance.

I used to "school" all my jumpers myself, with a good lad to ride with me. Putting "dummies" up for this purpose often ruins a horse. He is rushed at his fences in a ridiculous manner. He is thus flurried, does not take off accurately, and lands anyhow; he must be given time at first. With reference to some of the lads employed to ride "schooling"—they want teaching themselves—an ex-cross-country rider remarked:

"They are in far too great a hurry to get to the other side, yet they are as useless there as here or anywhere else. They might ride very well," he added with a flourish, "if they knew how; and they don't look like learning how in a thousand years or so." In that time, however, they may help to spoil many good horses unless their services are requisitioned with caution. Oh, for the finer "hands"!

Here is additional advice to be studied like the dictionary: never take the youngsters at too large a place to start with. As long as they do not refuse and do jump, be satisfied for the moment, because more ambitious attempts will follow in due season. High flights at first are undesirable. Rome was not built in a day, and we cannot hope to teach a horse how to jump efficiently unless we give him a few preliminary lessons of the right sort. If he begins to acquire a habit of refusing, he is certain to cause a great deal of trouble. I know a fine horseman who is now "schooling" youthful steeds over a natural country for hunting; if they stop with him he does not turn them round and give another run. They have to jump from a stand or get over as best they can, perhaps with a scramble or a fall. He is always prepared to take that chance.

"Horses," he says, "are like women: if you let them get out of hand, you have immense difficulty in bringing them to the scratch again." Few are refractory when he is in the saddle. I have seen him jump the regulation ditch almost from a stand, and when hounds are running he goes wonderfully well on what may be classified as "raw material." All that means an instinctive knack and splendid "hands." Nothing else can do the trick in the style approved by connoisseurs.

Assuming that a neophyte has attained fair proficiency, we must certainly send him a nice gallop of 2 miles over hurdles before he runs in public, so that he may not make a hole in his manners (or in his jockey) when he comes to a serious struggle. Folly is shown by betting on him until his jumping is all serene. Too much is taken for granted sometimes in this connection. For example, there are owners who, having seen a three-year-old clear a hurdle pretty well, believe that he is fit to run, and, accordingly, they put up an able jockey to ride him when he knows nothing about his business. Results are likely to be shattering. My notion is that such an impatient policy is to be contemned; there is little or no sense in it as regarded from a practical view. "Schooling" ought to be done at home,

not on the racecourse. We do not ask children to recite on the stage before they have learned how to articulate with some degree of success. If jockeys' lives were not so cheap, there would not be quite so much variegated sport as at present in Merry England.

The "schooling" of steeplechasers is a more important and difficult work than that just sketched. We must begin with plain fences not too large; the first lessons should be as simple and easy as possible, so long as they are done satisfactorily. A wise plan is to have a low white rail in front of every fence, because horses thus grow accustomed to it, and scarcely realise the difference between such obstacles and the more formidable ditch. They learn to skip over the one as cleverly as the other. Nothing comes amiss to them, as a rule, when they have acquired patent-safety tactics.

I certainly think also that the rail before every ditch on a racecourse ought to be painted white, since that calls a horse's attention to it; he sees in time what he has to do—"get on with your business" is a familiar term for it—and a spill may be avoided. I always had these low white rails, as advised, when "schooling" my own jumpers at Walton; the immunity from accident

was gratifying. I only broke my collar-bone once when engaged on such work, but there were several severe shakings. They caused a soreness of cuticle, a haziness of mind, for the moment. It is impossible to go through these thrilling experiences without an occasional variation in the shape of a twisted rib and a pang or two.

I have not the slightest objection to the "ditch" fence as at present constructed; and when horses are adequately "schooled," it should have no terrors for them or for their jockey. Danger arises when their education has been undertaken perfunctorily, when they have not been put through the mill with sufficient earnestness at home, when their trainer trusts a little to chance, and hopes that, in dramatic phrase, "it will be all right at night." It is often all wrong in the afternoon, so far as the unfortunate jockey is concerned. He is not paid extra for concussion of the brain unless his employer is a broad-minded man.

Some horses are, of course, natural jumpers, and give little or no trouble. They take to the game kindly, as the saying is, their heart is in the work; and, even if they do not enjoy it; or are glad when it is over (the usual thing with

Saturday night's beer in view), their performance is smart enough. They give a cleanly exhibition. And there are others not so splendidly gifted. Here we meet with trouble; we do not ask for it; it comes with the flowing tide, and we are obliged to make the best of the situation. Some horses do not like jumping. I heard of a big stallion who was sent a gallop over hurdles the other day; he cleared one or two, and tried to worry the rest. No persuasion was successful in getting him to go straight, so that the task was abandoned as hopeless. That was an exceptional case, of course, but it serves to indicate that a jockey's programme, when the morning's "schooling" begins, does not represent a bed of roses. Bouquets are not thrown at him if he escapes mutilation. Cheers do not reward him when he comes up smiling after a knock-out.

"Are you going on?" a trainer asked a lad who had fallen three times in one gallop over fences. "No," answered the urchin, "I am not going on"—he was more frightened than hurt—"I am going off; and if you dare to accompany me I shall start in the opposite direction." He was an Irish rider.

A story is told about an eminent jockey who, during the course of a long "schooling" gallop,

wrecked so many fences that the trainer received him, after he had pulled up, with a brow of thunder. "If you ride for me much longer," growled that master of the horse, "I shall be obliged to have iron-plated jumps and a squib or two, so as to distract your attention from the work of demolition." "And what about my cast-iron constitution?" retorted the other merrily; "besides," he went on, kindling to his theme, "your horses jump when they do not partially forget, and when they quite forget"—he raised his voice—"the shock does not improve their jockey's memory." He received his marching orders next day, and he thanks his lucky stars that he is still able to walk.

XXII

TRIALS

XXII.—TRIALS

It is not too much to say that trials are often a disappointment so far as race-horses are concerned, that the results expected do not always materialise, and that surprises are constantly in store. If horses were machines a different story would have to be told. Owners, too, are generally sanguine in this relation. As one of those sportsmen remarked, with a twinkle in his eyes: "Before my youngsters are tried I would not take a thousand pounds apiece for them, and after they are tried I estimate their net value at about two-pen'orth of cold gin." Anticipation is usually the fastest "flyer" in one's stable. Many of our gees are swans before we put them through the mill, when the grist they accumulate for us is infinitesimal. Another owner said: "I tried my horse to beat a steam-engine, don't you know, and I found that he could not beat a steam-roller." It is no use pitching our hopes too high in this direction, because a cruel

"purler" may bring us to earth at any moment. The rebound is never pleasant.

My father's practice was to try his yearlings prior to 1st January in view of the entries, and I rode in nearly all those gallops. The distance was about $3\frac{1}{2}$ furlongs. If we got a young 'un to beat a decent-selling plater at 2 st. 7 lb. we were satisfied, having a conviction that, with ordinary luck, the juvenile was sure to win a race of some sort. We did not employ the time-test in those days. Yet, in my opinion, the results worked out just as correctly as they do according to the clock; owners were not afraid to bet at the psychological moment with infinite animation; the pencillers were occasionally touched up to a pretty tune. It is probable that the system of timing gallops has not done them any serious harm.

The statement has been advanced that if all trials came out accurately on the course, if the form were reproduced with mathematical precision in both places, there would soon be no bookmakers in existence. I scarcely agree with that idea. In many races there are several well-tried competitors who are fancied by their connections, thus creating a brisk market, and giving an appropriate zest to the festivity. We can

hear the odds being cried without a sinking of our spirit. Besides, men who strive to beat the bookmakers at their own game, so to speak, have not much left to play with, as a rule, when the numbers go up for the last race.

"Flyers" over a country have to be tried just as carefully, of course, as "flyers" on the flat, and there is no reason to doubt that the results achieved are equally reliable. The services of jockeys ought to be utilised as far as possible in such gallops. Another matter to be remembered is this: Some horses do not go as well in public as in the home trial, and that delinquency on their part has been the cause of a great deal of money being left in the ring. Many worthy trainers and owners have been thus stripped, to some extent, of their unearned or hard-earned increment through no fault of their own. A gay deceiver has, in sportive phrase, put them in the cart. A "welsher" in equine garb has lightened their pockets.

And now, as the saying is, for the interpretation of the dream. Once I tried a horse called "J.B." at Walton, and also at Gatwick, 2 miles over hurdles. There were three in the gallop; all were ridden by jockeys with the colours on; it was a rattling good spin, and, naturally, I was

one of the chief conspirators busy in the pigskin. On that occasion "J.B." beat "Charles III." at 7 lb., and "Charles III." was capable of winning a hurdle race with 12 st. 7 lb. on his back. Here was surely something good enough to bet on till the cows came home wagging their tails behind them. Please to note, gentle reader, the terrible consequence of our enterprise: it is worth your while.

We ran both the horses named in a hurdle race at Kempton, "Charles III.," with 12 st. 3 lb., and "J.B." with 10 st. I rode the latter, who was our selected champion, and—oh, the pity of it!—he was emphatically "down the course." "Charles III.," ridden by young "Bob" Adams, now training abroad, was only beaten by a head. The secret of that shock to our nerves was that "J.B." would not do his best in public. He was not (what is termed) a "terrier in the pit," not strenuous in actual combat, and there are many others like him. They can catch pigeons at home and flats abroad. Brought into the arena, they are ready to throw up their sponge before an effective blow is struck, before there is a drop of blood on it; they begin to "funk"—what it is to have a classical education! —ere their jockey steals up to them hand in

glove—I mean whip in hand. They curl up ignominiously under punishment.

Trials, like appearances, are often deceptive, and it is a great blessing that we are not induced to bet on appearances, or our own would soon undergo a material deterioration. *Nihil sine labore*, and we must work hard to find everything out in this relation. I am familiar with another instance of a private gallop that could not have been quite *comme il faut*—and we *are* going it a bit amongst these foreign languages. My father tried "Laceman" and "Antler"—who belonged to the late Mr John Barnard, of Epsom—and "Antler" was successful. The spin was regarded as thoroughly authentic and reliable; care had been taken to make it so.

Accordingly, my astute sire sold "Laceman," and in public subsequently the other did not prove to be anything like so good a race-horse as "Laceman," who turned out to be a champion sprinter. The most cautious men may be led astray to some extent by tests in camera. Still, admittedly, "Antler" won several nice races, including the Nottingham Handicap, with F. Archer in the saddle, whilst I also won on him at Alexandra Park. Some horses are better out than at home, and probably "Laceman" was one

of that kind; or, at least, he must have been so when "Antler" beat him. The heat of conflict, the fire of battle, and the stimulus of public excitement are necessary to wind up certain warriors to concert pitch. They do not give their hardest punches (or true running) till war is declared. It is bad for the other fellow when they mean business.

The great point in a trial is to have a good pace—a truly run race—from start to finish. Hence the importance of having jockeys up who know how fast they are going and have a keen appreciation of their surroundings. Thus, in my young days, so far as trials on the flat were concerned, my father always rode the trial horse in order to ensure a good pace throughout, and few mistakes were made in that direction. I wish that I could here furnish extracts from our old volume giving an account of sundry notable gallops on Epsom Downs; but space is precious, life is short, so is a column, and we are nearing the end of our labours. It is not easy to crowd even into a quart pot more than a thirsty man can drink comfortably—perhaps in one noble coup. What price the froth?

When a two-year-old is tried early in the spring to beat a useful plater at 2 st., and

succeeds in doing so, we have reason to estimate his prospects in a favourable light. He may score at the first time of asking if the enemy does not muster in exceptionally strong force, and assuming that his connections are in a betting humour on the eventful day. I have ridden two-year-olds that have astonished me by the smart manner in which they—dare I say?—hopped the twig. I should be giving nothing away—not even myself, an inestimable donation—if I wrote a minute description of those trials; but when the pinch comes I seem to shrink from the ordeal. Certain reticences must be observed in this bright sporting chronicle. As an old-fashioned owner once told me at the races: "If you do not know when to keep your mouth shut, my boy, you will soon have nothing to put into it worth mastication, and that will not be soothing to your gums." Such words of ripe philosophy sank deeply into a young and ardent mind. I think that I have known when to keep my mouth shut, and when to open it with judiciously assorted victuals in view. If only I were not "wasting!"

Trials also constitute a valuable educational process for budding jockeys. The latter thus acquire a knowledge of the rudiments of their

business; continued practice helps to make them perfect, or as perfect as poor human beings are ever likely to be in the saddle or elsewhere. Judgment of pace, power to "finish" effectively, confidence, quickness, capacity to take instant advantage of all openings offered—those are the qualifications that a sharp lad is likely to pick up by riding constantly in trials. In that way does an employer become familiar with his ability. A mount in public is given in due season; then everything depends on the neophyte himself. If he does not grow too heavy, if he likes plenty of work and a minimum quantity of rich food, if he is able to do his share of "wasting" cheerfully and without a sour face or stomach, he may reach the top of the tree. If his head does not swell too rapidly for that giddy position, he may remain there till he can afford to abjure the muzzle without remorse of conscience. Then does his enjoyment begin, and he feels that he has not earned an income for nothing.

"They are as interesting as a catalogue with the place of sale dexterously omitted"—such was a joker's account of the lists of trials offered for the public delectation; and I cannot speak fairer if I have to go down on my knees and beg for mercy. If you back such information once in five times you

probably save four bets. The trainer is the only sound authority on this subject. What we want is to throw up our hat, not our sponge; hence caution is necessary. Asked which two-year-old was his best, a Newmarket trainer treated the question as though it were a conundrum which could only be answered in a silly way. "I thought a chestnut colt," he said, "was the best once, and now he is beaten by those he has beaten, whilst the latter go on whacking each other with ridiculous consistency. To find the best I shall have to try them over again at catch-weights, and back the one ridden by an infant jockey." He might do worse if the sucking Archer were glued on.

XXIII

SOUTH HATCH

XXIII.—SOUTH HATCH

My father went to train at South Hatch, Epsom, in the year 1860; and, somewhat curiously, there are no authentic records to indicate the date of the actual origin of that place as racing stables. An old resident informs me, however, that race-horses were trained there "hundreds of years ago"—he might have lived a century, at least, so confident was his tone—and that he remembers South Hatch when it was little more than "a cottage and a barn." It is a great deal more now. A handsome new house has been built, rows of new boxes have been erected, and the whole establishment is thoroughly equipped according to the most modern ideas. The all-round results are satisfactory. Yet, oddly, we have no information as to the beginnings of this sporting centre. How true it is that nobody knows less about a house than those who live in it! The rent is often a trifling difficulty.

In his book entitled "Riding Recollections

and Turf Stories," H. Custance, the once celebrated jockey, mentions that he went to live at South Hatch about 1856 with Mr "Mellish," who was better known as Mr Ned Smith. That gentleman had at one time nearly forty horses in training there, including "Adamas," "Huntingdon," "Squire Watt," and "Tame Deer." They used to win in their turn—perhaps oftener when the need was pressing. Apparently, however, they did not fly at too high game as a rule, and Custance relates some amusing incidents connected with their performances at sundry country meetings. Money does not seem to have been very plentiful in those "good old days"; some of the stakes were small.

But Mr "Mellish" was quite an indomitable owner; what he sighed for he played for with enthusiasm, rarely missing fire; and, according to report, he once told his jockey at a meeting in the wilds of Yorkshire: "If you don't win this race, my lad, you will have to walk home with the horse, and who is to keep you both in clover during the journey the Lord only knows." Such emphatic riding orders are apt to make even the smallest jockey feel like a hero in disguise, disgust, or despair. Walking home with a horse is not an exhilarating experience (with uncertainty as

to maintenance *en route*) when the home is probably a distant speck on the map, and the horse is a wretched pedestrian.

Many famous race-horses have been sheltered at South Hatch. "Caractacus" stopped there when he won the Derby, ridden by the lad who "did" him. My friend Jem Adams would have steered him on that occasion if he could have got off "Exchequer," and he tells a funny story about that race. But I must not poach on his preserves—they are too precious, and the tale is his, not mine; he makes the best of it without variations. The jockey who won that Derby on "Caractacus" seems to have had no success afterwards. He was lost to fame as quickly as he gained it—a quaint "double" which may console many of us when a few of our wildest hopes have failed to materialise.

"Hampton" was trained at South Hatch by my uncle, James Nightingall—who once rode all the winners at a rural meeting and had the gloves on with Tom Sayers the same night—but it is not necessary for me to describe "Hampton's" achievements. They belong to an epoch prior to that in which I won my spurs. Nor need I say much about "Cecil," who was prepared here for the Cesarewitch, which he won, or

about "Ursula," who secured the Earl Spencer's Plate, etc.: I did not ride them. They appear to have won pretty comfortably without my assistance in the saddle; and it is a curious reflection, by the way, that nobody (not even the most splendid jockey) seems to be more indispensable after he has finished than before he has begun. If he has only put a bit by for a rainy day!

My father trained "Shifnal" here when that horse won the Grand National at the second time of asking. He was bought out of a selling race at Alexandra Park. At his first essay for the "Liverpool," "Shifnal" did not quite please his indefatigable trainer—his condition left something, perhaps, to be desired by a keen expert in the art of fitness—and after the race my father said to Mr C. Hibbert, pointing to "Shifnal," "There you see the winner of next year's 'National.'" Few Turf vaticinations are realised so correctly as that was; it came true to the letter.

After his initial struggle at Aintree, leg troubles were suffered by "Shifnal." They were rather serious; he was fired and turned out for a while, being vastly benefited by that course of treatment. Practically sound again, his second

preparation for premier cross-country honours was thoroughly successful. Well ridden by the late John Jones, who was a near neighbour of ours at Priam Lodge, he won at his second attempt as recorded, and there was joy in the South Hatch camp that night. Several small inmates were not forgotten. One of them—myself, to wit—had no idea that he was destined to ride three Grand National winners in England and one in Scotland, to say nothing about minor triumphs placed to the credit of his account. Another innings—it is a platitude—might put new heart into us and give us a fresh lease of life.

The story of "Ilex," also trained at South Hatch, I have already told. I rode him in pretty nearly all his work at home, and I recollect my sire's wrath when on a crisp winter's morning I larked "Ilex" over a hurdle in our paddock for the sake of a little *divertissement*. The paternal eloquence flowed freely in my direction. "Here you are," cried the author of my being, "playing about with the favourite for the 'National,' when you know that if anything happens to him I shall not cut you off with a shilling—I shall cut you off with a whip." His bark was generally worse than his bite; the

noise did not herald much of an explosion, and he was a very careful man with his horses. They absorbed his attention in a general way—the way he liked.

The private hurdle and steeplechase course belonging to South Hatch is at Walton Heath, about 3 miles from the stables; and all the fences there are designed, of course, according to the "regulation" pattern. They are pretty strongly built up in harmony with the finest classical taste. They "want doing," in festive phrase, and if they are half done a complete "purler" is likely to be the result. This is, in my opinion, one of the best "schooling" grounds in England for young 'chasers, and the jumping of twenty horses or more there of a morning provides a brisk sporting spectacle. To ride half of that number—first off one, then on to another, with a few more in waiting—involves a sufficient expenditure of energy for a nice morning's work. There may be a fall or two to shake up the preposterously enterprising jockey.

People who are advised by their physician to take horse exercise for the benefit of their stagnant liver might do worse than to emulate, even in a partial degree, the vigorous performances thus indicated. What is better than to go the

whole hog or none, even if one is unconnected with the pork industry, when one's liver is in need of variety? We used to feel very fit indeed after those strenuous jumping tournaments at Walton. Yet, to make a clean breast of it, I never had a fall there which shattered me indescribably or beyond recognition by my friends. I was only knocked insensible a few times, and broke a rib or two. One rib more or less disagreeably fractured does not matter in that relation. It is all in the day's work, and—wages or no wages—we must be thankful when the day's work is done.

The South Hatch stables are situated close to Epsom Downs, and the horses are walked direct from their boxes into a large paddock at the back of the house, and then on to the Downs, thus having no road work. The gallops are kept in excellent order and condition all the year round. Even in summer Six Mile Hill affords good "going"; and, as I need scarcely add, many winners are trained there every season. I am sure that my father, brother, and myself have had our fair share of winners, both over a country and on the flat, whilst training at Epsom. As a local oracle remarked with regard to this point: "All we want is the 'goods,' my boy, the right sort of

horses, and then we can win as many races as other people—perhaps more when our circumstances are unusually desperate." That is true: the spur of necessity often leads to a great deal of the top-speed business with a profit attached. Petty cash transactions are not considered *de rigueur* in this arena. We do not play in marbles with the bookmakers in full blast.

Our winter gallops at Epsom are also excellent, and the circular 2-mile tour represents a delightful journey. Starting at the back of Sherwood's and finishing at Tattenham Corner, we soon find out, having slipped along merrily all the way, whether a horse "gets the distance," whatever it may be, or whether he is no Blucher in that capacity. No labour or expense is spared in respect to maintaining these gallops in capital trim. Suitable "schooling" hurdles are put up there for practice during the winter months.

I may also point out with becoming modesty that it costs almost as much to train a horse at Epsom as at Newmarket, taking jumpers and flat-races together, a brilliant combination or galaxy of talent; and, having said that, I may surely be allowed now to leave this court without a stain on my character. The evidence I have given has been thoroughly tested, and found to be

unimpeachable. The stories I have told have been applauded by connoisseurs for their extraordinary veracity, if not for their subtle humour. I take off my hat with thankfulness, having removed the perspiration from my brow, at the end of my intellectual labours; and if I am induced to revel in this sort of conflict again, I shall dash into it head first as usual. It is almost as inspiriting as the riding of a winner at a nice price.

THE END

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